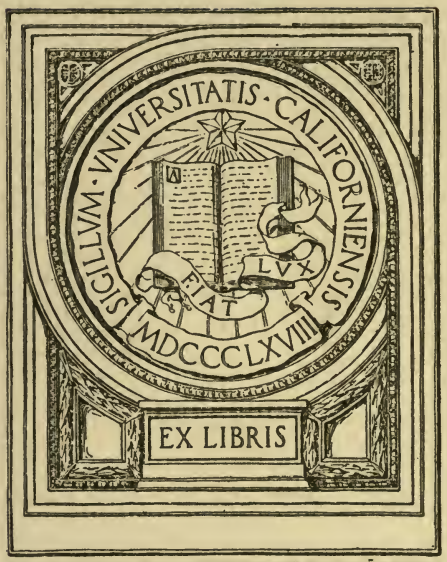

THE

LIFE

OF

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.

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SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

WITH

CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS

ON HIS WORKS.

BY

ROBERT ANDERSON, M. D.

THIRD EDITION.

EDINBURGH:
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Narrative was originally prefixed to the "Poetical Works" of JOHNSON, in the general edition of the "Works of the British Poets, with Prefaces, Biographical and Critical," printed in 1795.

A separate edition was printed, the same year, in octavo, accelerated so as to exclude such additions and improvements as an opportunity for a revisal might have supplied.

Both editions having been, during a considerable time, out of print, and a

new edition called for, in the intervening period, the subject has been thought not to be exhausted by the researches of which it has afforded the basis, but still likely to interest the public.

In revising the Narrative for a new edition, an opportunity has been found of supplying several deficiencies, both in the chronological series of events, and the critical account of writings, which the compendious brevity of a Preface rendered unavoidable; and of annexing occasional annotations, illustrative of personal history, from the pen of the late Dr Thomas Percy, Bishop of Dromore.

The notices of the venerable Annotator concerning his illustrious friend, are printed, without any alteration, from an interleaved copy of the second edition, prepared, in the intimacy of friendship, for the use of this edition, in

1805, and distinguished by the subscription of his name.

It is impossible to suppress the reflection, that the preparation of this volume has been protracted, amidst the interruptions of sickness and sorrow, sufficiently heavy for mortality, till the amiable and learned Prelate, to whose recollections it owes its best recommendation, has sunk into the grave, and wants himself an affectionate memorial of his excellencies and virtues, and his eminent services to literature and religion.

EDINBURGH,
1st *May* 1815.

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THE events of the life of JOHNSON, who has written the lives of so many eminent persons, and so much enriched our national stock of biography, criticism, and moral instruction, have been related by friend and foe, by panegyrists and satirical defamers, by the lovers of anecdote, and the followers of party, with a diligence of research, a minuteness of detail, and a variety of illustration, unexampled in the records of literature.

Besides several slight sketches of his life by unknown authors, taken sometimes with a favourable flattering pencil, sometimes in the

broader style of caricature, ample biographical accounts of him have been given to the world by Mr Tyers, Mrs Piozzi, Dr Towers, Sir John Hawkins, Mr Boswell, and Mr Murphy, who were his most intimate friends, and wrote from personal knowledge. Their several publications, which place his character in very different and often opposite points of light, by exhibiting a striking likeness of the features of his mind, which were strong and prominent, and by recording so considerable a portion of his wisdom and wit, have exquisitely gratified the lovers of literary biography, and largely contributed to the instruction and entertainment of mankind.

The publications of Mr Tyers, Mrs Piozzi, Dr Towers, and Mr Murphy, come under the description of 'Biographical Sketches,' 'Anecdotes,' and 'Essays,' composed with little regard to discrimination, but aspiring above the titles that are given to them, by felicity of narration and copiousness and variety of intelligence. Those of Sir John Hawkins and Mr Boswell are more elaborately composed, and

entitle them to the exclusive appellation of his biographers.

The narrative of Sir John Hawkins contains a collection of curious anecdotes and useful observations, which few men but its author could have brought together; but a very small part of it relates to the person who is the subject of his biographical commemoration. The ponderous incumbrance of foreign matter seems to overload the memory of his deceased friend, and, in the account of his own life, to leave him scarcely visible. He appears to be a worthy and well-informed man; but he possesses neither animation nor correctness, expansion of intellect, nor elegance of taste. He writes without much feeling or sentiment, and displays few marks of the *desiderium chari capitis*. His work is heavy, cold, and prolix; but there are discoverable in it a vein of pure morality, many valuable notices of contemporary biography, and many gleams of good sense and openings of humanity, sometimes checked by ignorance, and sometimes by prejudice.

The narrative of Mr Boswell is written with more comprehension of mind, accuracy of intelligence, clearness of narration, and elegance of language; and is more strongly marked by the amiable features of affectionate remembrance. He was peculiarly fitted for the task of recording the sayings and actions of his illustrious friend, by his assiduous attention, and habitual reverence. From the commencement of his acquaintance with him, he had the scheme of writing his life constantly in view; and continued his collections, with persevering diligence, for upwards of twenty years. He gave a specimen of his being able to preserve his conversation, in a characteristic and lively manner, in his "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides." His veneration and esteem for his friend induced him, at a subsequent period, to go through the laborious task of digesting and arranging the immense mass of materials, which his own diligence and the kindness of others had furnished him, and of forming the history of his life; which was re-

ceived by the world with most extraordinary avidity.

Xenophon's *Memorabilia* of Socrates may possibly have suggested to Mr Boswell the idea of preserving and giving to the world the *Memorabilia* of his venerable friend; but he professes to have followed the model of Mason in his "Memoirs of Gray." He has, however, the advantage of Mason, in the quantity, variety, and richness of his materials. To compare his collections with the most esteemed of that class of compilements known by the name of "Books in *Ana*," would not be doing justice to them. The incidental *conversations* between so eminent an instructor of mankind and his friends, the numerous body of *anecdotes*, literary and biographical, and the *letters* which are occasionally interspersed, and naturally introduced in the narrative part of his ample collections, open and disclose to the eager curiosity of rational and laudable inquiry, an immense storehouse of mental treasure, which far exceeds, in merit and value,

the voluminous collections of the wise and witty sayings of the learned and ingenious men of other nations. With some venial exceptions on the score of vanity, the exaggeration of panegyric, and the minute tittle-tattle of anecdote *, and some inexcusable exceptions on the score of malignity, the misrepresentation of private character, and the violation of the confidence of society, his work exhibits the most copious, interesting, and finished picture of the life and opinions of a wise and learned man that was ever consecrated by the zeal of friendship to posthumous reputation.

The eccentricities of Mr Boswell have been the subject of ridicule in various different forms and publications, by men of superficial understanding and ludicrous fancy. His failings it is useless to detail; he is now beyond the reach

* It is surely an exception more than venial to violate one of the first and most sacred laws of society, by publishing private and unguarded conversation of unsuspecting company into which he was accidentally admitted. Bishop Percy.

of praise or censure*. Many have supposed him to be a mere relater of the sayings of others; but he possessed considerable intellectual powers, for which he has not had sufficient credit. It is manifest to every reader of discernment, that he could never have collected such a mass of information and just observations on human life, as his very instructive and entertaining work contains, without great strength of mind and much various knowledge; as he never could have displayed his collections in so lively a manner, had he not possessed a picturesque imagination, a happy turn for humour and wit, and an easy fluent eloquence, calculated to recommend and adorn the most trivial subjects, without deviating into puerility.

In reviewing the life of this extraordinary man, after his chosen friends, an enlargement of the stock of *Johnsoniana*, already in the

* He died at London, May 19. 1795, in the 55th year of his age. He had many failings, and many virtues, and many amiable qualities, which predominated over the frailties incident to human nature.

possession of the public, is not the principal object of attention. Without the advantage of personal knowledge, the present writer has not the presumption to suppose himself qualified to improve, by a few after-strokes of a casual hand, the most perfect portrait of an eminent man that ancient or modern times have beheld; nor the temerity to court a comparison with his predecessors, in their exclusive pretensions to copiousness of intelligence, and variety of illustration. He has no secret anecdotes to bring to light, no private opinions to communicate, no remarkable sayings to record, and no new facts to embellish his narrative. Every thing to which the fame of this great writer could give importance has been gleaned with a minuteness of research, that leaves nothing to be supplied. Every thing that is known concerning his private character, and the particularities of his conduct, have been published without distinction. Nothing is left the present biographer, but to make a just estimate of the collections in the hands of the public, to form a right idea of what should

be given to the world, and what should be withheld; and, with a view to popular information, to collect what is diffused, to give a concise, yet full, a faithful, yet temperate, account of his personal history and literary productions, digested in the form of a chronicle; subjoining an estimate of his character, an examination of his writings, the testimonies of his biographers, and the judgments of contemporary critics.

Samuel Johnson was born at Lichfield in Staffordshire, September 7, 1709, O. S. His father, Michael Johnson, was a native of Cubley, a small village in Derbyshire, of obscure extraction, who settled in Lichfield as a bookseller, and carried on that business at all the neighbouring towns on market days; but was so respectable as to be made one of the magistrates of that city *. He was a man of a large and robust body, and of a strong and active mind; but was always subject to a morbid me-

* He served the office of sheriff in 1709, under bailiff in 1718, and senior bailiff in 1725.

lancholy. He was a zealous high-church man and Jacobite; though he reconciled himself, by casuistical arguments of expediency and necessity, to take the oaths imposed by the Government. He was a pretty good Latin scholar; and being a man of good sense and skill in his trade, he acquired a reasonable share of wealth, of which he afterwards lost the greatest part, by engaging unsuccessfully in the manufacture of parchment. He had a brother of the name of Andrew, who, for some time, kept the ring in Smithfield, appropriated to wrestlers and boxers, and was so remarkable for his strength and skill in the art of attack and defence, that "he was never thrown or conquered." His mother, Sarah Ford, descended of an ancient race of substantial yeomanry in Warwickshire, was the sister of Dr Joseph Ford, a physician of great eminence, and father of the Rev. Cornelius Ford, chaplain to the Earl of Chesterfield, supposed to be represented by the Parson near the punch-bowl, in Hogarth's "Modern Midnight Conversation;" a man, "whose

abilities, instead of furnishing convivial merriment to the voluptuous and dissolute, might have enabled him to excel among the virtuous and the wise*." She was a woman of distinguished understanding, prudence, and piety. They were well advanced in years when they married, and had only another child, named Nathaniel, who succeeded his father in his business; of whose manly spirit his brother has been heard to speak with pride and pleasure.

During the period of infancy all children are prodigies of form and understanding to their parents. With a natural fondness they exaggerate every symptom of sense into the perfection of wisdom, and decorate every feature with an adventitious grace. If the object of their admiration should at more mature years become distinguished for excellence, it is hoped that we may believe wonders of the child, because we have seen greatness in the man. Hence, in our fondness for the marvellous, the traditions of the nursery respect-

* *Life of Fenton.*

ing such persons are amplified beyond the bounds of credibility, and recited with all the confidence of truth.

Every great genius must begin with a prodigy; and it is not to be supposed that Johnson should be without attestations of these miracles of early genius, which are believed by some to be as necessary to the attainment of future pre-eminence, as that fruits should be preceded by the blossom. Among other stories of his infant precocity, generally circulated, and generally believed, we are told by Mrs Piozzi and Sir John Hawkins, that, at the age of three years, he trod by accident upon one of a brood of eleven ducklings, and killed it, and upon that occasion made the following verses:

Here lies good master duck,
Whom Samuel Johnson trod on;
If it had liv'd, it had been *good luck*,
For then we'd had an *odd one*.

This prodigy is scarcely exceeded by the bees on Plato's lips, or the doves that covered

the infant poet with leaves and flowers; for how should a child of three years old make regular verses, and in alternate rhyme? The internal evidence is sufficient to counterbalance any testimony that these verses could be the production of a child of such an early age. But, by good fortune, credulity is relieved from the burden of doubt, by Johnson's having himself assured Mr Boswell, that they were made by his father, who wished them to pass for his son's. He added, "my father was a foolish old man, that is to say, foolish in talking of his children." He always seemed mortified at the recollection of the bustle his father made to exhibit him as a prodigy of early understanding. "That," said he to Mrs Piozzi, "is the great misery of late marriages; the unhappy produce of them becomes the plaything of dotage *."

He derived from his parents, or from an unwholesome nurse, the distemper called the

* Mrs Piozzi's Anecdotes, p. 14.

King's Evil *. Jacobites at that time believed in the efficacy of the royal touch. His mother, yielding to this superstitious notion, and the corresponding advice of Sir John Floyer, then a physician at Lichfield, in her anxiety for his cure, when he was two years old carried him to London, where he was actually touched by Queen Anne †. But the disease, too obstinate

* "I was, by my father's persuasion, put to one Marclew, commonly called Bellison, the servant or wife of a servant of my father, to be nursed, in George-lane, where my mother visited me every day. Dr Swinfen told me that the scrofulous sores which afflicted me, proceeded from the bad humours of the nurse, whose son had the same distemper. My mother thought my disease derived from her family." *Annals*, &c. p. 10.

† This healing gift is said to have been derived to the kings of England from Edward the Confessor, who performed the first cure of this kind. The last of our princes that practised this delusion was Queen Anne. In the London Gazette of the year 1707, is inserted a proclamation, inviting her scrofulous subjects to receive the benefit of this inherent power. The ritual for this office is to be found in Bishop Sparrow's 'Collection of Articles, Canons,' &c. and in most of the impressions of the Common Prayer Book, printed in Queen Anne's reign. See Barrington's "Observations on Ancient Statutes," p. 107.

to yield to remedies more powerful, greatly disfigured his countenance, naturally harsh and rugged *, impaired his hearing, and deprived him of the sight of his left eye; of which he has been heard to say, that he never remembered to have enjoyed the use. "The dog," said he, "never was good for any thing."

He was first taught to read English by Dame Oliver, a widow, who kept a school for young children in Lichfield. His next instructor, in English, was a master whom he familiarly called Tom Brown, who, he said, "published a spelling-book, and dedicated it to the UNIVERSE." At eight years old he began to learn Latin in the free-school of Lichfield, at first under the care of Mr Hawkins, the under-master, whom he has described as "a man skilful in his little way." With him he was about two years; a period, "which," he says,

* His countenance was not so harsh and rugged as has been misrepresented, and no otherwise disfigured by the King's Evil than its having a scar under one of his jaws, where some humour had been opened, but afterwards healed. And this being only a simple scar, attended with no discoloration, excited no disgust. BISHOP PERCY.

"I remember with pleasure; for I was indulged and caressed by my master, and, I think, really excelled the rest*. He was then removed to the upper school, and put under Mr Holbrook; whom Dr Taylor has described as "one of the most ingenious men, best scholars, and best preachers of his age †." Mr Hunter, the head-master, under whose tuition he rose progressively, was a very respectable teacher, and a worthy man; but, according to his account, was "very severe, and wrongheadedly severe." He had for his school-fellows, Dr James, Author of the "Medicinal Dictionary," and inventor of the fever-powder, Mr Lowe, canon of Windsor; Dr Taylor, prebendary of Westminster and rector of Market-Bosworth; Mr Congreve, chaplain to Archbishop Boulter, and Mr Hector, surgeon in Birmingham ‡. With Dr Taylor and Mr Hector, he afterwards maintained a particular intimacy.

* *Annals*, &c. p. 25.

† Boswell's Life of Johnson, vol. i, p. 21. ed. 1799.

‡ Among other eminent men, Addison, Wollaston, Garrick, Bishop Newton, &c. were educated at this semi-

While at school, he is said by Mr Hector to have been indolent, and averse from study. But the procrastination of his studies seems neither to have prevented the timely performance of his exercises, nor to have blemished them with inaccuracies; for "he was never known to have been corrected at school, unless for talking and diverting other boys from their business." Indeed, such was the superiority of his talents above those of his companions, that three of the boys, of whom Mr Hector was sometimes one, are said to have assembled submissively every morning, to carry him triumphantly upon their shoulders to school. This ovation is believed by Mr Boswell to have been an honour paid to the early predominance of his intellectual powers alone; but they who remember what boys are, and who consider that Johnson's corporeal prowess was by no means despicable, will be apt to

nary. There were, at one period, five judges upon the bench of that school; Lord Chief Justice Willes, Lord Chief Baron Parker, Mr Justice Noel, Sir Robert Lloyd, Baron of Exchequer, and Mr Justice, afterwards Lord Chief Justice Wilmot.

suspect that the homage was enforced, at least as much by awe of the one, as by admiration of the other.*

In the autumn 1725, when he was about sixteen years old, he received an invitation from his cousin Ford, to pass a few days at his parsonage-house, on the borders of Staffordshire, who detained him some months, became his instructor in the classics, and the director of his studies. He was always sensible how much he owed to this witty and profligate relative; who, with talents that might have made him conspicuous in literature, and respectable in any profession, chose to be eminent for vice; and always spoke of him with tenderness, praising his acquaintance with life and manners, and recollecting one general direction for his studies, which he followed with a good inclination: "Obtain," said he, "some general principles of every science: he who can talk only on one subject, or act only in one depart-

* Though a strong boy may command weaker boys when present, it is not likely he could compel them, at a distance, to come and carry him to school, in the manner here described. Bishop Percy.

ment, is seldom wanted, and perhaps never wished for, while the man of general knowledge can often benefit, and always please."

The predictions of this man of wit and sense, concerning his future conduct, indicate the imperfect expansion, at this early period of his life, of the features of peculiarity which mark a character to succeeding generations. "You will make your way," said he, "the more easily in the world, I see, as you are contented to dispute no man's claim to conversation-excellence: they will, therefore, more willingly allow your pretensions as a writer."

On his return to Lichfield, at the Whitsuntide following, Mr Hunter, for reasons which, at this distance of time, it is vain to inquire, refused to receive him again into the school. He was, therefore, sent, by the advice of his cousin Ford, to the school of Stourbridge in Worcestershire, of which Mr Wentworth was then master; whom he has described as "a very able man, but an idle man, and to me very severe; yet he taught me a great deal." He seems to have been there in the double capacity of a

scholar and usher, repaying the learning he acquired from his master by the instruction he gave to the younger boys.

He thus discriminated to Dr Percy, Bishop of Dromore, his progress at his two grammar-schools: "At one, I learnt much in the school, but little from the master; in the other, I learnt much from the master, but little in the school."

He remained at Stourbridge little more than a year*, and then returned home, where he pursued his studies; but not upon any regular plan. Of this method of attaining knowledge, he seems ever after to have entertained a favourable opinion, and to have recommended it, not without reason, to young men, as the surest means of enticing them to learn. What he

* Yet here his genius was so distinguished, that, although little better than a school-boy, he was admitted into the best company of the place, and had no common attention paid to his conversation; of which remarkable instances were long remembered there. Hence it may be inferred, that he either remained at Stourbridge longer than a year, or occasionally revisited his acquaintance there, before he removed to London. This he might frequently do, when he afterwards resided at Birmingham, not far from Stourbridge. Bishop Percy.

read, without any scheme of study, was not works of mere amusement. "They were not," said he, "voyages and travels, but all literature, all ancient authors, all manly; though but little Greek, only some of Anacreon and Hesiod. But in this irregular manner I had looked into a great many books, which were not commonly known at the universities, where they seldom read any books but what are put into their hands by their tutors; so that when I came to Oxford, Dr Adams told me I was the best qualified for the university that he had ever known come there *."

He had already given several proofs of his poetical genius, both in his school exercises and in other occasional compositions. Of these Mr Boswell obtained a considerable collection from Mr Wentworth, the son of his master, and Mr Hector his school-fellow; of which he has preserved some translations from *Homer*, *Virgil*, *Horace*, &c. Unfortunately the communica-

* Boswell's Johnson, Vol. i, p. 34.

tions of Mr Wentworth are not distinguished from those of Mr Hector. Such a precaution would have enabled us to have distinguished with certainty the efforts of the boy from the production of riper years. His translation of the *first Eclogue of Virgil* is not so harmonious as that from the *sixth book of Homer;* and both are inferior in this respect to those which he has made of the *Odes of Horace.* Indeed, in the style and manner of versification used in the last, and in some other of his juvenile pieces, he seems to have made little alteration in his more experienced days; and it must be added, that, in point of smoothness, little improvement could have been made.

After a residence of two years at home, Mr Andrew Corbet, a gentleman of Shropshire, undertook to support him at Oxford, in the character of a companion to his son, one of his school-fellows; "though, in fact," says Mr Boswell, upon the authority of Dr Taylor, "he never received any assistance whatever from that gentleman." He was accordingly entered a commoner at Pembroke College,

Oxford, October 31, 1728, being then in his nineteenth year.

On the night of his arrival at Oxford, his father, who had anxiously accompanied him, found means to have him introduced to Mr Jorden, Fellow of Pembroke college, who was to be his tutor. According to Dr Adams*, who was present, he seemed very full of the merits of his son; and told the company he was a good scholar and a poet, and wrote Latin verses. His figure and manner seemed strange to them; but he behaved modestly, and sat silent, till, upon something which occurred in the course of conversation, he suddenly struck in, and quoted Macrobius: and this gave the first impression of that extensive reading in which he had indulged himself.

Of his tutor, Mr Jorden, he gave Mr Boswell the following account: "He was a very worthy man, but a heavy man; and I did not profit much by his instruction. Indeed, I did not attend him much." He had, however, a love and respect for Jorden, not for his litera-

* Then one of the junior fellows, afterwards master, of Pembroke college.

ture, but for his worth. "Whenever," said he, "a young man becomes Jorden's pupil, he becomes his son."

The fifth of November was at that time kept with great solemnity at Pembroke College, and exercises upon the gunpowder plot were required. Johnson neglected to perform his exercise. To apologize for his neglect, he gave in a short copy of verses, intituled *Somnium*, containing a common thought, "that the muse had come to him in his sleep, and whispered, that it did not become him to write on such subjects as politics; he should confine himself to humbler themes;" but the versification was truly Virgilian.

Having given such a specimen of his poetical powers, he was asked by Mr Jorden to translate Pope's *Messiah* into Latin hexameter verse, as a Christmas exercise. He performed it with uncommon rapidity, and in so masterly a manner, that he obtained great applause for it, which ever after kept him high in the estimation of his college, and indeed of all the university. Pope, impelled by gratitude and taste, perhaps

not unassisted by vanity, is reported to have returned a copy of it to Mr Arbuthnot, with this declaration, "that the author would leave it a question for posterity, whether his or mine be the original?" It was first printed by his father, with an excusable vanity, without his knowledge; and afterwards in "A Miscellany of Poems," published by subscription at Oxford, in 1731, by John Husbands, A. M. Fellow of Pembroke College, with this modest motto from Scaliger's Poetics, "*Ex alieno ingenio poeta, ex suo tantum versificator.*"

The particular course of his reading while at Oxford, and during the time of vacation which he passed at home, cannot be traced. From his earliest years he loved to read poetry and romances of chivalry. He read Shakespeare at a period so early, that the speech of the ghost in "Hamlet" terrified him when he was alone. Horace's Odes were the compositions he most liked in early life; but it was long before he could relish his satires and epistles. He told Mr Boswell, what he read *solidly* at Oxford was Greek, not the Grecian

historians, but Homer and Euripides, and now and then a little epigram; that the study of which he was most fond was metaphysics; but he had not read much even in that way. We may be absolutely certain, however, both from his writings and his conversation, that his reading was very extensive. He projected a common-place book to the extent of six folio volumes; but, according to Sir John Hawkins, the blank leaves far exceeded the written ones.

In 1729, while at Lichfield, during the college vacation, the "morbid melancholy," which was lurking in his constitution, gathered such strength as to afflict him in a dreadful manner. He was overwhelmed with an horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience, and with a dejection, gloom, and despair, that made existence misery. He fancied himself seized by, or approaching to insanity; in conformity with which notion he applied, when he was at the very worst, to his godfather, Dr Swinfen, physician in Lichfield, and put into his hands a

state of his case, written in Latin, with much judgment, perspicuity, and eloquence. In the zeal of friendship, Dr Swinfen inconsiderately circulated it among his friends, as an instance of extraordinary sagacity and research; a proceeding which so much offended his godson, that he was never afterwards fully reconciled to him. That he should have supposed himself approaching to insanity, at the very time when he was giving proofs of a more than ordinary soundness and vigour of judgment, is less strange, than that Mr Boswell should consider the vigour of *fancy* which he displayed on such a subject a proof of his sanity. It is a common effect of melancholy, to make those who are afflicted with it imagine that they are actually suffering those evils which happen to be most strongly presented to their minds. But there is a clear distinction between a disorder which affects only the imagination and spirits, while the judgment is sound, and a disorder by which the judgment itself is impaired. Whatever be the arguments in favour of free-will, of volition unrestrained by the force and pre-

valence of motives, it must be allowed that the effects of reason on the human mind are not at all times, and on all subjects, equally powerful. The mind, like the body, has its weak organs; in other words, the impressions on some subjects are so deeply fixed, that the judgment is no longer able to guide the operations of the mind, in reasoning on, or in judging of them. The imagination seizes the rein; and, till the force of the idea is lessened from habit, the usual powers are suspended. But this is not madness; for strong impressions of various kinds will, in different minds, produce similar effects. From this dismal malady, which he "did not then know how to manage," he never afterwards was perfectly relieved; and all his labours, and all his employments, were but temporary interruptions of its baleful influence.

In the history of his mind, his religious progress is an important article. He had been early instructed in the doctrines of the church of England by his mother, who continued her pious care with assiduity; but, in his opinion,

not with judgment. "Sunday," said he, "was a heavy day to me when I was a boy. My mother confined me on Sundays, and made me read "The Whole Duty of Man;" from a great part of which I could derive no instruction. When, for instance, I read the chapter on theft, which, from infancy, I had been taught was wrong, I was no more convineed that theft was wrong than before; so there was no accession of knowledge. A boy should be introduced to such books, by having his attention directed to the arrangement, to the style, and other excellencies of composition, that the mind, being thus engaged by an amusing variety of objects, may not grow weary." That which is read without pleasure is not often recollected, nor infixed by conversation; and, therefore, in a great measure, drops from the memory. Yet the practice of being cheated into learning our duties by the ornaments of style, by means of which error may be equally inculcated, is liable to many objections.

He communicated to Mr Boswell the following account of "the first occasion of his

thinking in earnest of religion. I fell into an inattention to religion, or an indifference about it, in my ninth year. The church at Lichfield, in which we had a seat, wanted reparation; so I was to go and find a seat in other churches; and having bad eyes, and being awkward about this, I used to go and read in the fields on Sunday. This habit continued till my fourteenth year; and still I find a great reluctance to go to church. I then became a sort of lax *talker* against religion, for I did not much *think* about it; and this lasted till I went to Oxford, where it would not be *suffered*. When at Oxford, I took up Law's "Serious Call to a Holy Life," expecting to find it a dull book (as such books generally are), and perhaps to laugh at it. But I found Law quite an over-match for me *. And this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion, after I became capable of rational inquiry."

* In a letter from Miss Hill Boothby to Johnson, dated 1755, is the following passage: "Have you read Mr Law, not cursorily, but with attention? I wish you

Serious impressions of religion, from particular incidents, it is certain, have been experienced by many pious persons; though it must be acknowledged, that weak minds, from an erroneous supposition that no man is in a state of grace who has not felt a particular conversion, have, in some cases, brought a degree of ridicule upon them; a ridicule of which it is inconsiderate or unfair to make a general application. How seriously Johnson was impressed with a sense of religion from this time forward, appears from the whole tenor of his life and writings. Religion was the predominant object of his thoughts; though he seems not to have attained all the tranquillity and assurance in his practice of its duties that are so earnestly to be desired. His sentiments, upon points of abstract virtue

would consider him; "*His appeal to all that doubt*, &c." I think the most clear of all his later writings; and in recommending it to you, I shall say no more or less than what you will see he says in his *Advertisement to the Reader*." A few days before her death, 1756, he writes to her, "I have returned your *Law;* which, however, I earnestly intreat you to give me." *Annals*, Appendix, p. 140.

and rectitude, were in the highest degree elevated and generous; but he was unfortunate enough to have the sublimity of his mind degraded by the hypochondriacal propensities of his animal constitution. The serenity, the independence, and the exultation of religion, were sentiments to which he was a stranger. He saw the Almighty in a different light from what he is represented in the purer page of the gospel; and he trembled in the presence of Infinite Goodness. Those tenets of the church of England, which are most nearly allied to Calvinism, were congenial to his general feelings; and they made an early impression, which habit confirmed, and which reason, if ever exerted, could not efface. At the latter part of his life these terrors had a considerable effect; nor was their influence lost, till disease had weakened his powers, and blunted his feelings.

The year following, 1730, Mr Corbet left the university; and his father, to whom, according to Sir John Hawkins, he trusted for support, declined contributing any farther to

Johnson's maintenance, than paying for his commons. His father's business was by no means lucrative. His remittances, consequently; were too small even to supply the decencies of external appearance; and the very shoes that he wore were so much torn, that they could no longer conceal his feet. So jealous, however, was he of appearing an object of eleemosynary contribution, that a new pair having been placed at his door, by some unknown hand, he flung them away with indignation.

While thus oppressed by want, he seems to have yielded to that indifference to fame and improvement, which is the offspring of despair. "He was generally seen," says Bishop Percy, "lounging at the college gate, with a circle of young students round him, whom he was entertaining with wit, and keeping from their studies, if not spiriting them up to rebellion against the college discipline, which, in his maturer years, he so much extolled." The account of his conduct given by Dr Adams, who was his nominal tutor for some time be-

fore he quitted the college *, is more favourable to his happiness, but is less true. "Johnson," says he, "while he was at Pembroke College, was caressed and loved by all about him; he was a gay and frolicsome fellow, and passed there the happiest part of his life." But his own comment upon this opinion, when mentioned to him by Mr Boswell, shows how fallacious it is to estimate human happiness by external appearances: "Ah, Sir, I was mad and violent. It was bitterness which they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit; so I disregarded all power, and all authority."

He struggled for another year in this unequal conflict, and professed a desire to practise either the Civil or the Common Law; but his debts in college increasing, and his scanty remittances from Lichfield, which had all along been made with great difficulty, being

* Mr Jorden quitted the college in 1731, and his pupils were transferred to Dr Adams; so that had Johnson returned, Dr Adams would have been his tutor.

discontinued, his father having fallen into a state of insolvency, he was compelled, by irresistible necessity, to relinquish his scheme, and left the college in autumn 1731, without a degree, having been a member of it little more than three years. This was a circumstance, which, in the subsequent part of his life, he had occasion to regret, as the want of it was an obstacle to his obtaining a settlement, whence he might have derived that subsistence of which he was certain by no other means.

From the university, where he gained no friends, and formed no useful connections, he returned to his native city, destitute, and not knowing how he should gain even a decent livelihood. But he was so far fortunate, that the respectable character of his parents, and his own merit, secured him a kind reception in the best families at Lichfield. He passed much time in the families of Mr Gilbert Walmsley, register of the Ecclesiastical Court, Mr Howard, Dr Swinfen, Mr Simpson, Mr Butt, Mr Levett, and Captain Garrick, father

of the great ornament of the British stage. Of Mr Walmsley, one of the first friends that literature procured him, "at whose table he enjoyed many cheerful and instructive hours," he has drawn the character, long after his decease *, in the glowing colours of gratitude, intermingled with the dark hues of political prejudice.

"He was of an advanced age, and I was only not a boy: yet he never received my notions with contempt. He was a whig, with all the virulence and malevolence of his party; yet difference of opinion did not keep us apart. I honoured him, and he endured me.

"He had mingled in the gay world without exemption from its vices or its follies; but had never neglected the cultivation of his mind. His belief of revelation was unshaken; his learning preserved his principles; he grew first regular, and then pious.

"His studies had been so various, that I am not able to name a man of equal knowledge.

* He died Aug. 3, 1751, aged 71; and a monument to his memory has been erected in the cathedral of Lichfield.

His acquaintance with books was great; and what he did not immediately know, he could at least tell where to find. Such was his amplitude of learning, and such his copiousness of intelligence, that it may be doubted whether a day now passes in which I have not some advantage from his friendship *."

In his abborrence of whiggism he has imputed to his friend and benefactor "all the virulence and malevolence of his party;" yet Mr Walmsley, whose real character is a noble one, loved Johnson enough to endure in him the principles he despised.

In the circles of Lichfield he was frequently in the company of ladies, particularly at Mr Walmsley's, whose wife and sisters-in-law, the daughters of Sir Thomas Aston, Bart. of the county of Chester, were remarkable for elegance and good-breeding. In the same society he became acquainted with the Hon. Henry Hervey, one of the branches of the noble family of that name, who married Miss Aston, and was

* *Life of Smith.*

quartered at Lichfield as an officer of the army *. At a subsequent period of his life he thus described this early friend. "Harry Hervey was a vicious man, but very kind to me. If you call a dog Hervey I shall love him." He had an unlimited partiality for all who bore the name, or boasted the alliance of an Aston or an Hervey. Of Miss Molly Aston, the lady of great beauty and elegance, mentioned in the *Criticisms on Pope's Epitaphs*, who was afterwards married to Captain Brodie of the navy, he used to speak with the warmest admiration. When Mrs Piozzi once asked him, which had been the happiest period of his past life? he replied, "It was that year in which I spent, in a select company, a whole evening with Molly Aston. That indeed was not happiness, it was rapture; but the thoughts of it sweetened the whole year. Molly was a beauty and a scholar, a wit and a whig, and she talked all in praise

* He was the third son of the first Earl of Bristol, and having got the Aston estate by his wife, he assumed the name of that family. He quitted the army, and took orders. See "Collins's Peerage."

of liberty; and so I made this epigram upon her. She was the loveliest creature I ever saw!

> Liber ut esse velim, suasisti, pulchra Maria;
> Ut maneam liber, pulchra Maria, vale *."

Of this epigram, Mrs Piozzi, Mr Joddrel, and Mr Boswell, among others, have offered translations. The following version is given by Mr Joddrell:

> When first Maria's soft persuasive strain
> Bids universal liberty to reign;
> Oh! how at variance are her lips and eyes!
> For while the charmer talks, the gazer dies.

In December 1731 his father died, in the 79th year of his age, in very narrow circumstances; for, after providing for his mother, that portion of the effects which fell to his share amounted only to twenty pounds. This appears by a note in one of his diaries, of

* Anecdotes, p. 157.

the following year, which is remarkable for his early resolution to preserve through life a fair and upright character *. "I now, therefore, see that I must make my own fortune; meanwhile, let me take care, that the powers of my mind may not be debilitated by poverty, and that indigence do not force me into any criminal act."

In the forlorn state of his circumstances he accepted the employment of usher in the school of Market-Bosworth in Leicestershire, to which he went on foot, July 16, 1732. He resided in the house of Sir Woolston Dixie, the patron of the school, to whom he officiated as a kind of domestic chaplain, and who treated him with intolerable harshness. His employment was irksome to him in every respect; and after suffering for a few months, "complicated misery," he relinquished a situation which he

* 1732, *Junii* 15. Undecim aureos deposui, quo die quicquid ante matris funus (quod serum sit precor) de paternis bonis sperare licet, viginti scilicet libras, accepi. Usque adeo mihi fortuna fingenda est. Interea, ne paupertate vires animi languescant, nec in flagitia egestas abigat, cavendum.

ever afterwards remembered with the strongest aversion, and even recollected with a degree of horror,

Being now again totally unoccupied, he was invited by his school-fellow Mr Hector, now settled as a surgeon at Birmingham, to pass some time with him there, as his guest, at the house of Mr Warren, a bookseller, with whom he lodged. Mr Warren was very attentive to Johnson; and obtained the assistance of his pen, in furnishing some periodical essays in a newspaper of which he was proprietor. These early specimens, of a species of composition by which he afterwards became distinguished, it would be desirable to see; but they are no longer in existence.

In June 1733 he resided in the house of a Mr Jarvis, in another part of that town, where he translated and abridged, from the French of the Abbé le Grand, a *Voyage to Abyssinia*, written originally by *Jerome Lobo*, a Portuguese Jesuit, employed in the East India mission at Goa. To Lobo's *Voyage*, which contains a narrative of the unsuccessful en-

deavours of a company of Portuguese missionaries to unite the people of Abyssinia to the church of Rome, Le Grand added an account of the final expulsion of the Jesuits from that country; and fifteen *Dissertations* on the history, religion, government, &c. of Abyssinia. For this work, in the progress of which Mr Hector was occasionally his amanuensis and corrector of the press, Johnson had from Mr Warren only five guineas. The book was poorly printed, on a very bad paper, in Birmingham, with a *Preface*, and a *Dedication*, in the name of the bookseller, to John Warren, Esq. of Pembrokeshire, and published by Bettesworth and Hitch, Paternoster Row, London, 8vo, 1735, without the translator's name*. It is remarkable as the first prose work of Johnson, and as it contains a relation of the discovery of the fountains of the Nile, a century and a half before our adventurous countryman Mr Bruce endured so many dan-

* History of the Works of the Learned, for March 1735.

gers and fatigues to explore its sources *. The translation exhibits no specimen of elegance †, neither is it marked by any character of style, which would lead to a discovery of the translator from an acquaintance with his latter productions; but the *Preface* and *Dedication* contain strong and not unfavourable specimens of that elegance of construction, and harmony of cadence, which he afterwards adopted.

In February 1734 he returned to Lichfield; and in August following published proposals for printing, by subscription, an edition of the Latin poems of Politian, *Angeli Politiani Poe-*

* The researches of Dr Murray, the learned editor of "Bruce's Travels," have ascertained, that our countryman was not anticipated in the discovery of the head of the Nile by Lobo, but by Pedro Paez; whose description of its sources was published by Kircher and Isaac Vossius, and copied by Lobo. See "Life of Bruce," &c.

† There was perhaps no great room for elegance in a faithful translation of a simple narrative; but a superior skill and judgment are displayed by the manner in which he has abridged some theological dissertations annexed thereto by Le Grand. Bishop Percy.

mata Latina, quibus, notas, cum historia Latinæ poeseos, a Petrarchæ ævo ad Politiani tempora deducta, et vita Politiani fusius quam antehac enarrata, addidit SAM. JOHNSON. The work was to be printed in thirty 8vo sheets, price 5s. The proposals notify that, "Subscriptions are taken in by the editor, or N. Johnson, bookseller of Lichfield," his brother, who had taken up his father's trade *. For want of encouragement the work never appeared, and probably never was executed. The project, indeed, was not likely to meet with adequate encouragement in a country town; but it is to be regretted that it was not afterwards revived, in more favourable circumstances; as a new life of Politian, and a history of Latin poetry from the age of Petrarch to the time of Politian, from the pen of Johnson, would have been a valuable accession to Italian literature.

We find him again this year at Birmingham; and in order to procure some little subsistence

* No particulars concerning his success are known. He died in 1737, in the 25th year of his age.

by his pen, he addressed a letter, under the name of *S. Smith*, to Mr Edward Cave, the original projector and editor of the "Gentleman's Magazine"*, November 25, 1734; in which he proposed, "on reasonable terms, sometimes to supply him with poems, inscriptions, &c. never printed before, and short literary dissertations in Latin or English, critical remarks on authors, ancient or modern, forgotten poems that deserve revival, loose pieces, like Floyer's †, worth preserving," &c. To this letter Mr Cave returned an answer, dated December 2. following; in which, Sir John Hawkins informs

* To the "Grubstreet Journal," a weekly publication, the world is indebted for this truly valuable literary miscellany. The chief conductors of it were Dr Martyn and Dr Russel, two young physicians, under the assumed names of *Bavius* and *Mævius*. It began in January 1730; and, meeting with encouragement, Cave projected an improvement on the plan, in a miscellany of his own; and, in the following year, gave to the world the first number of the "Gentleman's Magazine, or Monthly Intelligencer," under the assumed name of *Sylvanus Urban*, Gent. See "Memoirs of the Society of Grubstreet," Preface, p. 12.

† Sir John Floyer's Treatise on Cold Baths. Gent. Mag. 1734.

us, he accepted his offer; but it does not appear that any thing was done in consequence of it.

The terms of his engagement with Mr Cave cannot now be known; but it must have been a small resource for a maintenance. He found it necessary, therefore, to look around him for other employment. Accordingly, in 1735, he tendered his assistance as an usher to the Reverend Mr Budworth, master of the grammar-school at Brerewood in Staffordshire; but was rejected, from an apprehension, on the part of Mr Budworth, that the involuntary motions to which his nerves were subject, might render him an object of imitation, and possibly of ridicule, with his pupils.

He had, from his infancy, been sensible to the influence of female charms. When at Stourbridge school he was much enamoured of Olivia Lloyd, a young quaker, to whom he wrote a copy of verses, which has not been found. He conceived a tender passion for Miss Lucy Porter, whose mother he afterwards married, and whom he had frequent opportunities

of seeing at the house of Mr Hunter, his preceptor, whose second wife was her aunt. According to Miss Seward, the grand-daughter of Mr Hunter*, his *Verses to a Lady, on receiving from her a sprig of myrtle*, which have been erroneously ascribed to Hammond, "were written at her grand-father's, and addressed to Lucy Porter (as she herself acknowledged), when he was enamoured of her, two or three years before he had seen her mother, his future wife." But Mrs Piozzi's account of this little composition, from Johnson's own relation to her, is confirmed by the true history of those verses, from the recollection of Mr Hector; which is, that they were written at Birmingham, in 1731, at his request, in about half an hour, for his friend Mr Morgan

* She was the eldest daughter of the Rev. Thomas Seward, rector of Eyam in Derbyshire, canon residentiary of Lichfield, and one of the editors of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, who married Miss Elizabeth Hunter, daughter of Mr Hunter, head-master of Lichfield school. She is advantageously known to the world by the application of her talents to poetry and elegant literature. Desiring, and deserving, praise for her own ingenious

Graves, who waited upon a lady in the neighbourhood, who, at parting, presented him the branch, which he shewed him, and wished much to return the compliment in verse *.

His juvenile attachments to the fair sex were, however, very transient, and he never had a criminal connection. In 1735 he became the fervent admirer of Mrs Elizabeth Porter, widow of Mr Henry Porter, mercer in Birmingham, to whose family he had probably been introduced by his sister Mrs Hunter, or through his acquaintance with Mr Jarvis, who

writings, she accepted it from her contemporaries without repaying it to others. Awed by the majesty of his virtue, and jealous of his literary supremacy, she was by no means partial, in her conversation and writings, to the fame and honour of Johnson. His intellectual superiority, and moral purity, made him more liable to have some spot affixed to the splendour of his reputation, that it might not be totally insupportable. She died March 25, 1809, aged 69. A collection of her poems, edited by Mr Scott, was printed in 3 vols, 8vo, 1810; and a selection from her epistolary correspondence, by Mr Constable, in 6 vols. 8vo, 1811.

* See Correspondence between Miss Seward and Mr Boswell on this controversy, in Gent. Mag. vol. LIII. and LIV. and Boswell's Life, &c. vol. 1, p. 66, &c.

might be a relation of Mrs Porter, whose maiden name was Jarvis *. After a suit, not very tedious, he married her. "It was," he said, "a love-match on both sides." And, judging from the description of their persons, we must suppose that the passion was not inspired by the beauties of form, or graces of manner, but by a mutual admiration of each other's mind. Johnson's appearance is described as being very forbidding †. "He was then lean and lank; so that his immense structure of bones was hideously striking to

* She had a son and daughter; the former a captain in the navy, from whom his sister inherited a handsome fortune, acquired in the course of a long service. The same, or another son, a merchant in Leghorn, was on the eve of forming a matrimonial connection with Miss Sarah Seward, a sister of the poetess, at the time of her death in 1764. See "Poetical Works of Anna Seward," vol. 1. p. 115.

† Johnson's countenance, when in a good humour, was not disagreeable. His face clear, his complexion good, and his features not ill formed, many ladies have thought they might not be unattractive when he was young. Much misrepresentation has prevailed on this subject among such as did not personally know him.
BISHOP PERCY.

the eye, and the scars of the scrophula were deeply visible. He also wore his hair, which was straight and stiff, and separated behind; and he often had seemingly convulsive starts and odd gesticulations, which tended at once to excite surprise and ridicule." Mrs Porter was double the age of Johnson, and her person and manner, as described by Garrick *, were by no means pleasing to others. "She was very fat, with a bosom of more than ordinary protuberance. Her swelled cheeks were of a florid red, produced by thick painting, and increased by the liberal use of cordials; flaring and fantastic in her dress, and affected both in

* There was no great cordiality between Garrick and Johnson; and as the latter kept him much in awe when present, Garrick, when his back was turned, repaid the restraint with ridicule of him and his dulcinea, which should be read with great abatement; for, though Garrick, at the moment, to indulge a spirit of drollery, and to entertain the company, gave distorted caricatures of Mrs Johnson and her spouse, it would certainly have shocked him, had he known that these sportive distortions were to be handed down to posterity as faithful pictures.
BISHOP PERCY.

her speech and in her general behaviour *."
But Garrick, probably, as is the case in all such representations, considerably aggravated the picture.

It is to be observed, that whatever her real charms may have been, Johnson thought her beautiful; for in her *Epitaph* he has recorded her as such; and in his *Prayers* and *Meditations*, we find very remarkable evidence, that his regard and fondness for her never ceased even after death.

The marriage ceremony was performed July 9, 1735, at Derby; for which place the bride and bridegroom set out on horseback: and it must be allowed, that the capricious and fantastic behaviour of the bride, during the journey to church, upon the nuptial morn, as related by Mr Boswell, from his own account, was a singular beginning of connubial felicity.

"She had read," said he, "the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover

* See Boswell's Life, &c. Vol. i. p. 47–8.

like a dog. So, at first, she told me that I rode too fast, and she could not keep pace with me; and when I rode a little slower, she passed me, and complained that I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice, and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I therefore pushed on briskly, till I was fairly out of her sight. The road lay between two hedges, so I was sure she could not miss; and I contrived that she should soon come up with me. When she did, I observed her to be in tears *."

She was worth about L.800; which, to a person in Johnson's circumstances, made it a desirable match. To turn this sum to the best advantage, he hired a large house at Edial, near Lichfield, and set up a private classical academy, in which he was encouraged by his friend Mr Walmsley. In the "Gentleman's Magazine" for 1736, there is the following ADVERTISEMENT: "At Edial, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen are boarded and taught

* See Boswell's Life, &c. Vol. i. p. 68.

the Latin and Greek languages, by SAMUEL JOHNSON." The plan, notwithstanding the exertions of his friends, and his own abilities, proved abortive. The only pupils that were put under his care, were Garrick, then eighteen years of age, and his brother George, and Mr Offely, a young gentleman, of an ancient and respectable family in the neighbourhood *.

Whatever may have been his qualifications for communicating instruction by the regular gradations and patient industry, practised by men of inferior minds, his *Scheme for the classes of a grammar school,* given about this period to a relation, and preserved by Mr Boswell †, shews that he well knew the most

* Son of Mr Offely of Whichenoure Park in Staffordshire, the ancient manor of the Somervilles, held by the memorable service of giving a flitch of bacon as a reward to any husband and wife who could say, that they never had the least difference, nor contradicted one another, within the space of twelve months after marriage. Dunmow, in Essex, is held by a similar service.

† See Boswell's Life, &c. Vol. i. p. 71.

proper course to be pursued in the education of youth.

In the instruction of so small a number of pupils as were under his care, his leisure, of course, was, at this time, considerable, and we find him diligently employed in the composition of his tragedy of *Irene;* with which Mr Walmsley was so well pleased, that he advised him to proceed in it. It is founded upon an affecting passage in Knolles "History of the Turks*; a neglected book which he afterwards highly praised and recommended in the *Rambler*.

Among other neglected books to which he resorted for entertainment and relaxation, he had recourse, in the range of his desultory reading, to Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy;" a book of multifarious and recondite learning; of which he has been heard to say, "that

* Two tragedies, founded on this story, had already been produced by English writers; "The Unhappy Fair Irene," by Gilbert Swinhoe, Esq. printed at London, 4to, 1658, and "Irene, or the Fair Greek," by Charles Goring, Esq. acted at Drury-Lane Theatre, and printed at London, 4to, 1708.

it was the only book that ever took him out of his bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise."

Disappointed in his expectation of deriving subsistence from the establishment of a boarding school, in which he persevered about a year and a half, he now thought of trying his fortune in London, the great field of genius and exertion, where talents of every kind have the fullest scope, and the highest encouragement.

On the 2d of March 1737, being the 28th year of his age, he set out for London; and it is a memorable circumstance, that his pupil Garrick went thither at the same time, with intention to complete his education, and follow the profession of the law. They were recommended to the Reverend Mr Colson, master of the mathematical school at Rochester *, by a letter from Mr Walmsley, who mentions the joint expedition of these two eminent men to the metropolis, in the following manner:

* Afterwards Lucasian professor at Cambridge.

"This young gentleman, and another neighbour of mine, one Mr Samuel Johnson, set out this morning for London together. Davy Garrick is to be with you early the next week, and Mr Johnson, to try his fate with a tragedy, and to see to get himself employed in some translation, either from the Latin or the French. Johnson is a very good scholar and poet, and I have great hopes will turn out a fine tragedy writer."

How he employed himself upon his first coming to London, is not certainly known. His first lodgings were at the house of Mr Norris, a stay-maker in Exeter Street, in the Strand. Here he found it necessary to practise the most rigid economy. His *Ofellus* in the *Art of Living in London*, is a real character of an Irish painter, whom he knew at Birmingham, who initiated him in the art of living cheaply in London; "a man of a great deal of knowledge of the world, fresh from life, not strained through books."

Unfortunately, the precepts of his frugal friend could not prevent the slender stock of

money that he set out with from being exhausted. Garrick was also " beginning to be in want." In this extremity, Sir John Hawkins relates, that " the two young men, travellers from the same place," obtained credit from Mr Wilcox, a bookseller of eminence in the Strand; who " was so moved with their artless tale, that, on their joint note, he advanced them all that their modesty would permit them to ask (five pounds), which was soon after punctually repaid *." On this occasion, Mr Wilcox asked Johnson, " How do you mean to earn your livelihood in this town?" " By my literary labours," was the answer. Mr Wilcox eyed his robust frame attentively, and, with a significant look, said, " You had better buy a porter's knot." Johnson used to tell this anecdote to Mr Nichols; but he said, " Wilcox was one of my best friends."

Soon after his arrival in London, he renewed his acquaintance with the Honourable Henry Hervey, connected by marriage with

* Hawkins's Life, &c. p. 43.

the Astons of Lichfield. At the house of this early friend he had an opportunity of meeting genteel company, and was frequently entertained with a kindness and hospitality of which he ever afterwards retained a warm remembrance.

He had now written three acts of his tragedy of *Irene*, and he retired for some time to lodgings at Greenwich, where he proceeded in it somewhat farther, and used to compose walking in the Park; but he did not stay long enough in that place to finish it.

At this period he wished to engage more closely with Mr Cave; and proposed to him, in a letter dated "Greenwich, next door to the Golden Heart, Church Street, July 12, 1737," to undertake a new translation of Father Paul Sarpi's *History of the Council of Trent*, from the Italian, with large notes from the French version of Dr Le Courayer, which, he presumed, could not fail of a favourable reception. "If it be answered," he says, "that the history is already in English, it must be remembered, that there is the same objection

against Le Courayer's undertaking, with this disadvantage, that the French had a version by one of their best translators, whereas you cannot read three pages of the English history * without discovering that the style is capable of great improvements. Suppose the merit of the versions equal, we may hope, that the addition of the notes will turn the balance in our favour, considering the reputation of the annotator."

His proposal was accepted; but it should seem from this letter, though subscribed with his own name, that he had not yet been personally introduced to Mr Cave.

In the course of the summer he returned to Lichfield, where he had left his wife, and there he at last finished his tragedy; which was not executed with his rapidity of composition upon other occasions, but was slowly and painfully elaborated. The original unformed sketch of this tragedy, partly in the raw materials of prose, and partly worked up in verse,

* Sir Nathaniel Brent's Translation, 1676.

and a variety of hints for illustration, borrowed from the Greek, Roman, and modern writers, in his own hand-writing, he gave to Mr Langton, a few days before his death; who made a fair and distinct copy of the manuscript, which he ordered to be bound up with the original and the printed tragedy, and deposited the volume in the King's library.

In three months after, he removed to London with his wife; but her daughter, who had lived with them at Edial, was left with her relations in the country. His lodgings were for some time in Woodstock-Street, Hanover Square, and afterwards in Castle-Street, Cavendish Square. His tragedy being, as he thought, completely finished, and fit for the stage, he solicited Mr Fleetwood, the manager of Drury-Lane Theatre, to have it acted at his house; but Mr Fleetwood would not accept it.

Disappointed in his expectations of support from the representation of his play, and being now an adventurer in the British capital, without relations, friends, interest, or gainful profession, he was compelled to renounce dramatic

composition, the most profitable species of literature, and, assuming the precarious avocation of an "author by profession and trade," to depend on his stores of learning and extraordinary talents for the supplies of the passing day. For this purpose, he became connected, in a close and intimate acquaintance, with Mr Cave, and was enlisted by him, as a regular contributor to his magazine, which, for many years, was his principal resource for employment and support. He co-operated with his fellow-labourers in advancing the reputation of the Magazine, by the various admirable essays which he wrote for it, solely for maintenance *. A considerable period of

* At the commencement of the Magazine, Mr Cave depended chiefly for assistance on Guthrie, the historian, Boyse, author of "Deity," Moses Browne, author of "Sunday Thoughts," and the casual aid of several diffident scholars and young poets, who had been educated at the seminaries of Mr Watkins in Spital Square, and Mr Eames in Moorfields. He gradually received accession of strength from the aid of Savage, Johnson, Ruffhead, Hawkesworth, Dr Birch, Miss Eliza Carter, the Rev. Samuel Pegge *(Paul Gemsege)*, Mr John Canton, F. R. S. Mr John Bancks, Mr John Lockman, &c. The

his life is lost in saying that he was the literary hireling of Mr Cave, "for gain, not glory." The narrative is little diversified by the enumeration of his contributions: but the publications of a writer, like the battles and sieges of a general, are the circumstances which must fix the several eras of his life. In this part of the narrative, the pieces acknowledged by Johnson to be of his writing are printed in Italics, and those which are ascribed to him upon good authority, or internal evidence, are distinguished by inverted commas.

When he entered on the employment, to which he was compelled to resort from motives of necessity, he found Mr Cave struggling in a contest for the favour of the public with the proprietors of the "London Magazine;" a rival publication, undertaken by an associa-

Magazine obtained an unprecedented circulation; and, by affording a respectable repository for the discussions of criticism, the effusions of poetry, and the notices of biography, created a very ardent emulation among the dispensers of knowledge, to enlarge the boundaries of science, and advance the progress of literature.

tion of powerful booksellers *. Gratitude for such supplies as he received, prompted him to engage in the contest on the side of his employer; and he contributed to the "Gentleman's Magazine" for March 1738 a Latin ode, *Ad Urbanum*†; in which he celebrates his liberality and indefatigable diligence, in promoting the progress of literary information, with great elegance and ingenuity. A paraphrastic translation of the Ode, by an unknown correspondent, appeared, in the Magazine for May following.

At this period, the misfortunes and misconduct of Savage had reduced him to the lowest

* The first number of the "London Magazine" was published in April 1732, for J. Wilford, T. Cox, J. Clarke, and T. Astley. It was ably conducted for many years, and ceased to exist in 1785.

† Mr Urban, the fictitious designation assumed by the original editor of the "Gentleman's Magazine", and retained by his respectable successor, Mr David Henry, and the present editor, Mr John Nichols, to whom English literature is indebted for various elaborate and accurate illustrations of our national history, antiquities, topography, poetry, and biography.

state of wretchedness as a writer for bread; and his visits at St John's Gate, where the "Gentleman's Magazine" was originally printed, naturally brought Johnson and him together. Johnson commenced an intimacy with this unfortunate but imprudent man, disowned and persecuted by his mother, and combining with this singular misfortune considerable talents, fascinating manners, and vitiated habits. They were both authors, both had a fierce spirit of independence, and they were equally under the pressure of want. They had a fellow-feeling, and sympathy united them in a league of friendship.

It is melancholy to reflect, that Johnson and Savage were sometimes in such extreme indigence, that they could not pay for a lodging, so that they have wandered together whole nights in the streets. Yet, as Savage had seen life in all its varieties, and been much in the company of the statesmen and wits of his time, we may suppose, in these scenes of distress, that he communicated to Johnson an abundant supply of such materials as his philosophical

curiosity most eagerly desired, and mentioned many of the anecdotes with which he afterwards enriched the life of his unhappy companion, and those of other poets.

He mentioned to Sir Joshua Reynolds, that one night in particular, when Savage and he walked round St James's Square, for want of a lodging, they were not at all depressed by their situation, but in high spirits, and, brimful of patriotism, traversed the Square till four in the morning, reforming the world, dethroning princes, giving laws to the several states of Europe, inveighing against the minister, and "resolving they would *stand by their country*."

Sir John Hawkins supposes that "Johnson was captivated by the address and demeanour of Savage, who, as to his exterior, was to a remarkable degree accomplished. He was a handsome well-made man, and very courteous in the modes of salutation." He took off his hat, he tells us, with a good air, made a graceful bow, and was a good swordsman. "These accomplishments," he adds, "and the ease and pleasantry of his conversation, were probably

the charms that wrought on Johnson, who at this time had not been accustomed to the conversation of gentlemen *."

Johnson, indeed, describes him as having "a graceful and manly deportment, a solemn dignity of mien, but which, upon a nearer acquaintance, softened into an engaging easiness of manners." He remarks, "it was his peculiar happiness, that he scarcely ever found a stranger whom he did not leave a friend;" but at the same time confesses, "that he had not often a friend long without obliging him to be a stranger†;" a confession than which nothing can describe

* This is not correct. Johnson had been admitted to the best company both at Lichfield and Stourbridge; and, in the latter neighbourhood, had met even with George, afterwards Lord Lyttleton; with whom, having some colloquial disputes, he is supposed to have conceived that prejudice which so improperly influenced him in the Life of that worthy nobleman. But this could scarcely have happened when he was a boy of fifteen; and, therefore, it is probable he occasionally visited Stourbridge, during his residence at Birmingham, before he removed to London. See Note, p. 20.

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† *Life of Savage.*

more strongly the ruinous tendency of his habitual insolence and ingratitude. How highly he admired him for that knowledge which he himself so much cultivated, and what kindness he entertained for him, appears in the following verses in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for April 1738.

Ad RICARDUM SAVAGE *Arm. humani generis amatorem.*

Humani studium generis cui pectore fervet,
O! colat humanum te foveatque genus!

Between Johnson and Savage the connection was not of long duration; a scheme being about that time proposed to his companion, which was afterwards carried into execution, that he should retire to Swansea in Wales, and receive an allowance of fifty pounds a-year, to be raised by subscription; to which Pope contributed twenty pounds.

About this time he was introduced by Mr Cave to Miss Elizabeth Carter, the learned translator of Epictetus, who had obtained, at

an early age, even with competent judges, a distinguished reputation by several poetical contributions to the "Gentleman's Magazine *." Full of admiration of the depth of her learning, and the variety of her acquisitions, he complimented her in an epigram, *In Elizæ Enigma*, in Greek and Latin, which appeared in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for April 1738. At the same time he writes to Mr Cave, "I think she ought to be celebrated in as many different languages as Louis le Grand." His verses *to a Lady* (Miss Molly Aston), *who spoke in defence of Liberty*, first appeared in the same Magazine.

About a month after the appearance of his complimentary lines to Savage, he displayed his poetical powers, in all their strength, by the publication of his *London, a Poem, in imitation of the third satire of Juvenal*, 4to. He offered it to Mr Cave as "a poem for him to dispose of for the benefit of the author, under very disadvantageous circumstances of fortune." Cave,

* She published a small Collection of Poems in 1738, written before her twentieth year, printed by Cave, 4to.

"who had so much distinguished himself by his generous encouragement of poetry," communicated it to Dodsley, who had taste enough to perceive its uncommon merit, and thought it "a creditable thing to be concerned in." Dodsley gave him ten guineas for the copy; a sum certainly disproportioned to his labour and ingenuity; but he was actually in such distress, that the small profit which so short a poem could yield was counted as a "relief," and received with gratitude. It came out, anonymously, on the same morning with Pope's Satire, entitled "1738," and immediately attracted so much attention, that it "got to a second edition in the space of a week*." Lyttleton, the instant it was published, carried it in rapture to Pope, who then filled the poetical throne, without a rival; and to his credit, let it be remembered, that he was so struck with its merit, that he sought to discover the author, and prophesied his future fame. "Whoever he is," said he, "he will soon be *deterre*†;"

* Gentleman's Magazine for May 1738.

† "Ubi, ubi est, diu celari non potest." TERENT.

and it appears, from his note to Lord Gower, that he himself was successful in his inquiries. This admirable poem, written with the energy of the ancient satirist, and the elegance of the imitator of Horace, laid the foundation of his fame. In the original satire, the poet takes leave of a friend who was withdrawing himself from the vices of Rome. In the intended retreat of Savage, the unmerited treatment to which indigence is subjected, the insolence of ill-acquired wealth, and the oppressions of a corrupt administration, Johnson fancied he perceived a resemblance between the manners of the times and those of degenerate Rome; and drew a parallel between the corruptions of each, exemplifying it, with equal judgment and asperity, by characters then subsisting. The first lines manifestly anticipate the departure of Savage *.

* According to Mr Boswell, Johnson "was not so much as acquainted with Savage when he wrote his *London*." It has been ascertained, by Johnson's own authority, that it was "written in 1738," and the evidence of its publication in the month of May in that year is unquestionable. Surely the lines written by

"Though guilt and fondness in my breast rebel,
When injur'd *Thales* bids the Town farewel;
Yet still my calmer thoughts his choice commend,
I praise the hermit, but regret the friend.
Resolved at length, from Vice and London far,
To breathe in distant fields a purer air,
And, fix'd on Cambria's solitary shore,
Give to St David one true Briton more."

Johnson, as might be expected from his strong political prejudices, impregnated his poem with the fire of opposition. He adopted the common topics of patriotism, liberty, and independence, to gratify the malevolence of the Tory faction, who, professing themselves to be the friends of the people, employed all the animation and all the eloquence of resistance to power, to delude the nation into a belief, that Sir Robert Walpole, the objects of whose administration were peace and the ex-

Johnson, *Ad Ricardum Savage*, in April 1738, imply a previous acquaintance with him: for Johnson could not have praised a stranger in such terms. The delay of Savage's journey to Wales until the following year is a matter of little consequence, as the intention of such a journey would justify the lines alluding to it. See Boswell's Life, &c. vol. i, p. 94.

tension of commerce, was its greatest enemy, and that his opponents only meant its welfare. Mr Boswell candidly allows, that "the flame of patriotism and zeal for popular resistance with which it is fraught, had no just cause. There was, in truth, *no* "oppression," the "nation" was *not* cheated. Sir Robert Walpole was a wise and a benevolent minister, who thought that the happiness and prosperity of a commercial country like ours would be best promoted by peace; which he accordingly maintained with credit, during a very long period*." Making due allowance for the fallacy of these vulgar complaints, it is undoubtedly one of the noblest productions in our language, both for sentiment and expression. It contains the most spirited invectives against tyranny and oppression, the warmest predilection for his own country, and the purest love of virtue, interspersed with traits of his own particular character and situation. He heated his mind with the ardour of Juvenal, and wrote with the spirit and energy of a moral poet, and a sharp

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. i, p. 102.

censor of the times. Boileau had imitated the same satire with great success, applying it to Paris; but an attentive comparison will satisfy every reader that he is much excelled by Johnson. Oldham had also imitated it, and applied it to London; but there is scarcely any coincidence between the two performances, though upon the very same subject.

In the course of the protracted opposition maintained by the Tories, under the popular denomination of the country party, against the long and peaceable administration of Walpole, Mr Cave conceived the thought of enriching his magazine by the speeches in Parliament. In January 1736 he began to gratify his readers with as much of this kind of intelligence as it was possible to procure, or safe to communicate. The speeches for some time were brought home and digested by Guthrie*,

* Johnson, it is said, esteemed his fellow-labourer enough, to wish that his life should be written. He was descended of an ancient family in Scotland; but having a small patrimony, he came to London, and employed his talents and learning as an "author by profession." His political writings, though now forgotten, must have been

and afterwards sent by Mr Cave to Johnson for his revision. Parliament then kept the press in a mysterious awe, which made it necessary to have recourse to the artifice of giving the speeches under a fictitious designation. The *Debates in the Senate of Magna Lilliputia* appeared in the Magazine for June 1738, sometimes with feigned names of the several speakers, sometimes with denominations formed of the letters of their real names *.

When Guthrie had attained to a greater variety of employment, and the speeches were more and more enriched by the accession of

highly esteemed, as they procured him a pension from Government, which he enjoyed till his death, in 1769. His writings on criticism have considerable merit; but he is chiefly remembered by his "History of Scotland," and "Geographical, Historical, and Commercial Grammar."

* The proprietors of the "London Magazine," who also gave the debates, compelled by the same necessity that forced Cave to this subterfuge, resorted to another artifice. They feigned to give the debates in the Roman Senate; and, by adopting Roman names to the several speakers, rendered them more plausible than they appear under Cave's management. The artifice succeeded in both instances, and the debates were published with impunity.

Johnson's genius, it was resolved that he should do the whole himself, from notes furnished by persons employed to attend in both houses of Parliament. His sole composition of them began November 19, 1740, and ended February 23, 1742-3; a period distinguished by the struggle that preceded, and the public disappointment that followed, the downfal of Walpole *. From that time they were written by Hawkesworth to the year 1760; within which period the plan of the Magazine was enlarged by a Review of New Publications, conducted about two years by Ruffhead, and afterwards by Hawkesworth, till the year 1772. Johnson

* Pulteney was at the head of the opposition; yet no sooner was Walpole driven off, than Pulteney and Carteret entered into private negociations with the Newcastle party, who were men of Walpole's measures, and, compromising matters, Pulteney became Earl of Bath, and Carteret Earl Granville; "We have seen," says Lord Chesterfield, one of their party, who was not taken into the new-formed ministry, "the noble fruits of a twenty years opposition blasted by the connivance and treachery of a few, who, by all the ties of gratitude and honour, ought to have cherished and preserved them to the people." "Old England, or the Constitutional Journal," No. 1, Feb. 5, 1743.

acknowledged the debates to be spurious, long after the world had considered them as genuine. He cautioned Smollett, in bringing down his "History of England" to the last reign, not to rely on the debates as given in the Magazine, for they were not authentic; but, excepting their general import, the work of his own imagination. Some days previous to his death, he declared, that of all his writings they gave him the most uneasiness. The deceit, however, could not be very pernicious, in the effects of which so many persons were involved. Neither are they so completely his own composition as is generally supposed. That notes of the speeches were taken in the Houses of Parliament, and given to him, is evident from his own declaration; and it does not appear probable, that Mr Cave, who was ever attentive to the improvement of his Magazine, should be more negligent in procuring notes as accurate as he could, during the time when Johnson executed this department, than when it was in the hands of Guthrie. It seems at least most likely, therefore, that the language and

illustrations are Johnson's own, but that the arguments and general arrangements were taken from the several speeches spoken in either House.

The trade of writing, notwithstanding the diligence of labour, and the diversification of employment, was so little profitable, and his literary prospects, notwithstanding the success of his *London*, so unpromising, that he wished to accept an offer made to him, of becoming master of the free-school at Appleby * in Leicestershire,

* At this, and many other places, writers have fixed the free-school of which Johnson solicited to be master; but a gentleman, well acquainted with the neighbourhood of Stourbridge, believes it was at Treasle, a village lying between that town and Wolverhampton, where a grammar-school had been endowed, and is believed to have been then vacant. As this village, although within the borders of Staffordshire, is on the very verge of Shropshire, its situation might naturally be mistaken for the latter by Lord Gower or Mr Pope.

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Such was probable conjecture; but in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for May 1793, there is a letter from Mr Horn, one of the masters of the school of Appleby, in Leicestershire, which banishes every shadow of doubt; the salary, the degree requisite, the time of election, all agreeing with the statutes of Appleby; and the *Minute-book* of the school, declaring the head-mastership to be *at that time vacant.*

the salary of which was sixty pounds a-year. But the statutes of the school required that he should be a Master of Arts; and it was then thought too great a favour to be asked of the University of Oxford. Pope, without any knowledge of him but from his *London*, recommended him to Lord Gower, as appears from the following note, sent to Mr Richardson the painter, with *the imitation of Juvenal*, copied with minute exactness by Mr Boswell from the original in the possession of Bishop Percy:

"This is imitated by one Johnson, who put in for a public school in Shropshire, but was disappointed. He has an infirmity of the convulsive kind that attacks him sometimes, so as to make him a sad spectacle. Mr P. from the merit of this work, which was all the knowledge he had of him, endeavoured to serve him without his own application, and wrote to my Lord Gower, but he did not succeed. Mr Johnson published afterwards another poem in Latin, with notes, the whole very humorous, called the *Norfolk Prophecy*."

Lord Gower endeavoured to procure him a degree from Trinity College, Dublin, by the

following letter to a friend of Swift, dated Trentham, August 1, 1738, which has been often printed.

"Mr Samuel Johnson (author of *London*, a satire, and some other poetical pieces) is a native of this country, and much respected by some worthy gentlemen in his neighbourhood, who are trustees of a charity school, now vacant. The certain salary is sixty pounds a-year, of which they are desirous to make him master; but, unfortunately, he is not capable of receiving their bounty, which *would make him happy for life*, by not being a *Master of Arts;* which, by the statutes of this school, the master of it must be.

"Now, these gentlemen do me the honour to think that I have interest enough in you, to prevail upon you to write to Dean Swift, to persuade the University of Dublin to send a diploma to me, constituting this poor man Master of Arts in their University. They highly extol the man's learning and probity: and will not be persuaded, that the University will make any difficulty of conferring such a favour upon a stranger, if he is recommended

by the Dean. They say he is not afraid of the strictest examination, though he is off so long a journey, and will venture it, if the Dean thinks it necessary; choosing rather to die upon the road *than be starved to death in translating for booksellers;* which has been his only subsistence for some time past.

"I fear there is more difficulty in this affair than those good-natured gentlemen apprehend; especially as their election cannot be delayed longer than the 11th of next month. If you see this matter in the same light that it appears to me, I hope you will burn this, and pardon me for giving you so much trouble about an impracticable thing; but if you think there is a probability of obtaining the favour asked, I am sure your humanity and propensity to relieve merit in distress, will incline you to serve the poor man, without my adding any more to the trouble I have already given you, than assuring you, that I am, with great truth," &c.

This expedient failed. There is reason to think that Swift declined to meddle in the business; and to this circumstance Johnson's

known dislike of Swift has been often imputed *.

* The extraordinary prejudice and dislike of Swift, manifested on all occasions by Johnson, whose political opinions coincided exactly with his, has been difficult to account for; and is therefore attributed to his failing in getting a degree, which Swift might not chuse to solicit, for a reason given below. The real cause is believed to be as follows: The Rev. Dr Madden, who distinguished himself so laudably by giving premiums to the young students of Dublin College, for which he had raised a fund, by applying for contributions to the nobility and gentry of Ireland, had solicited the same from Swift, when he was sinking into that morbid idiocy which only terminated with his life, and was saving every shilling to found his hospital for lunatics; but his application was refused with so little delicacy, as left in Dr Madden a rooted dislike to Swift's character, which he communicated to Johnson, whose friendship he gained on the following occasion: Dr Madden wished to address some person of high rank, in prose or verse; and, desirous of having his composition examined and corrected by some writer of superior talents, had been recommended to Johnson, who was at that time in extreme indigence; and having finished his task, would probably have thought himself well rewarded with a guinea or two, when, to his great surprise, Dr Madden generously slipped ten guineas into his hand. This made such an impression on Johnson, as led him to adopt every opinion of Dr Madden; and to resent, as warmly as himself, Swift's rough refusal of the contribution; after which the latter could not decently request any favour from the University of Dublin.

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He made one other effort to emancipate himself from the drudgery of authorship, by endeavouring to be introduced to the bar at Doctor's Commons; but here the want of a Doctor's degree in Civil Law was also an insurmountable impediment.

He was, therefore, under the necessity of persevering in that course into which he was forced. We find him prosecuting his design of furnishing the English reader with a new translation of Father Paul's *History of the Council of Trent*, which was announced in the "Weekly Miscellany," October 21, to be published by subscription, in 2 vols. 4to, by Mess. Dodsley, Rivington, and Cave. After twelve sheets of this translation were printed off, for which he had received from Mr Cave, from August 2. 1738 to April 21. 1739, forty-nine pounds seven shillings, in small sums of two and sometimes four guineas at a time *, the design was given up; for it happened that another Samuel Johnson, librarian of St Mar-

* See Gentleman's Magazine for January 1785, p. 6.

tin's in the Fields, and curate of that parish, had engaged in the same undertaking, under the patronage of Dr Pearce, and the clergy; the consequence of which was, an opposition, which mutually destroyed each other's hopes of success. This accidental competition between the two translators is little to be regretted, as it compelled Johnson to change his employment, and engage in original composition; by which English literature has been more benefited than it could have been by the highest improvement he could bestow on the obsolete translation of the history of that memorable council. But in relinquishing a laborious undertaking, which might be spared, he prosecuted a part of his original design, in writing the life of the celebrated author of that able performance, for the "Gentleman's Magazine."

Besides his contributions to the "Gentleman's Magazine," for 1738, above mentioned, and the assistance he gave in writing the *Parliamentary Debates*, he contributed the *Life of Father Paul Sarpi* to the November Magazine,

and wrote the *Preface* to the volume; a species of writing in which his ability, nice adaptation, and felicity of expression, are equally remarkable.

The "Apotheosis of Milton, a vision," printed in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for 1738 and 1739, ascribed to him by Sir John Hawkins, was the production of Guthrie. The translation of "An Examination of Mr Pope's Essay on Man, from the French of M. Crousaz, Professor of Philosophy and Mathematics at Lausanne," printed by Cave in November 1738, 12mo, has been ascribed to him by the same authority; but Miss Carter has acknowledged that she was the translator. In his correspondence with Mr Cave on the subject, he gives the translation his entire approbation; and, coinciding in opinion with the Swiss professor concerning the tendency of Pope's Essay to favour the system of fatalism, and the doctrine of Leibnitz, was eager to promote the publication. Warburton came forward on the side of Pope, with "A Vindication of the Essay on Man;" and Johnson

became a moderator in the dispute, not long after, and joined Crousaz, as a zealous advocate of religion. The conclusion of his letter to Mr Cave, "I am yours, *Impransus* *," seems to convey a fair confession, that he wanted a dinner, probably from extreme indigence.

In 1739, besides the assistance he gave in writing the *Parliamentary Debates*, his contributions to the "Gentleman's Magazine," were, *The Life of Boerhaave; An Appeal to the Public in behalf of the Editor; Verses to Eliza; a Greek Epigram to Dr Birch* †; and *Considerations on the case of Dr Trapp's Sermons;* a plausible attempt to prove that an author's work may be abridged without injuring his property; reprinted in the Magazine for July 1787.

The same year, he joined in the popular clamour against Walpole, when it was loudest, and published his famous Jacobite pamphlet, intitled, MARMOR NORFOLCIENSE, *or An Essay*

* Boswell's Life, &c. Vol. 1, p. 111.

† English literature is indebted to this early friend of Johnson for the "History of the Royal Society," and other works of distinguished merit and utility.

on an Ancient Prophetical Inscription, in Monkish rhyme, lately discovered near Lynn, in Norfolk. By PROBUS BRITANNICUS. Printed for J. Brett, at the Golden Bull, opposite St Clement's church, in the Strand, London, 8vo. In this performance, the feigned inscription, in Latin verse, supposed to be found in the neighbourhood of Walpole's residence in the country, is followed by a translation in heroic verse. The Latin verse is of the kind which is called Leonine; and the translation possesses, in a great degree, the strength and harmony of his *Imitation of Juvenal**. The interpretation of the prophecy is adapted to the principles openly avowed by the Jacobites of the time; and the commentary concentrates all the topics of popular discontent, aggravated by ridicule, irony, and invective. He inveighs against the Brunswick succession, and the measures of government consequent upon it, with warm anti-Hanoverian zeal; and represents the evils attending on standing armies,

* The Inscription and the Translation are preserved in the London Magazine for 1739, p. 244.

and the balance of power, in the dark colours of anti-Revolutionary prejudice. The Jacobite principles inculcated by this pamphlet, according to Sir John Hawkins, aroused the vigilance of the ministry. A warrant was issued, and messengers were employed, to apprehend the author, who, it seems, was known. To elude his pursuers, he retired with his wife to Lambeth-Marsh, and there lay concealed in an obscure lodging till the scent grew cold. Mr Boswell, however, denies that there is any foundation for this story; for that Mr Steele, one of the late secretaries of the Treasury, had "directed every possible search to be made in the records of the Treasury and Secretary of State's Office, but could find no trace whatever of any warrant having been issued to apprehend the author of this pamphlet." Although this is no proof that there was no intention of prosecution, yet it is probable no prosecution was meditated; for the obnoxious pamphlet made but little noise, and had not a very extensive circulation. Sir John Hawkins could perceive in it "neither learning nor

wit;" but it obtained the honour of Pope's commendation*; and, considering it merely as a humorous party-pamphlet, it is deserving the praise of ingenuity. Of the vigour of thought, and power of language which distinguish his later writings, few marks, indeed, are perceivable in the *Norfolk Prophecy*.

His attachment to the Tory, or rather Jacobite party was further shewn, by an ironical pamphlet which proceeded from his pen, the same year, entitled, *A complete Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage, from the malicious and scandalous aspersions of Mr* Brooke, author of "Gustavus Vasa," 4to. Under the mask of a Vindication of the Licensers of the Stage, this was an attack on the Lord Chamberlain, for prohibiting the representation of Mr Brooke's tragedy of "Gustavus Vasa," after it had been rehearsed at Drury-Lane Theatre, and a day appointed for its public appearance. The countenance and patronage which the author received from the Prince of Wales and

* See page 78.

the leaders of opposition, awakened the suspicion of the ministry, and the strong spirit of liberty and patriotic zeal which glowed in his performance, subjected his principles to misconception, and rendered general and abstract sentiments of freedom suspected of particular and temporary application. The Lord Chamberlain closed the theatre on his play, but could not prevent its publication by subscription; "as it was to have been acted in the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane." In the suppression of "Gustavus Vasa," by the interposition of legal authority, Johnson found a reputable opportunity to employ his pen against the measures of government, and to ridicule the power vested in the Lord Chamberlain, respecting dramatic pieces, as a disgrace to a free country. To justify the rejection of this play, Sir John Hawkins selects a few passages, not one of which would give umbrage at this day *.

In July 1739, the subscription of fifty pounds a-year was completed for Savage, who

* In 1742 this play was performed in Dublin.

was to retire to Swansea, in Wales; and he parted with the companion of his midnight rambles "with tears in his eyes," never to see him more *. This separation was perhaps a real advantage to Johnson. By associating with Savage, who was habituated to the licentiousness and dissipation of the town, Johnson, though his good principles remained steady, did not entirely preserve that temperance for which he was remarkable in days of greater simplicity, but was imperceptibly led into some indulgences, which occasioned much distress to his virtuous mind †. It is said by Sir John

* Not liking Swansea, and resenting the neglect of his subscribers, he returned to Bristol, with an intention to come to London; and died August 4, 1743, in the Newgate of that city, where he had been imprisoned six months for a debt of but eight pounds.

† This seems to have been suggested by Mr Boswell, to account for Johnson's religious terrors on the approach of death; as if they proceeded from his having been led by Savage to vicious indulgences with the women of the town, in his nocturnal rambles. This, if true, Johnson was not likely to have confessed to Mr Boswell, and therefore must be received as a pure invention of his own. But if Johnson ever conversed with those unfortunate

Hawkins, that, during his connection with Savage, a short separation took place between Johnson and his wife. They were, however, soon brought together again. Johnson loved her, and showed his affection in various modes of gallantry, which Garrick used to mimic *. The affectation of fashionable airs did not sit easy on Johnson; his gallantry was received by the wife with the flutter of a coquette, and

females, it is believed to have been in order to reclaim them from their dissolute life, by moral and religious impressions; for to one of his friends he once related a conversation of that sort which he had with a young female in the street, and that asking her what she thought she was made for, "she supposed to please the gentlemen." His friend intimating his surprise, that he should have had communications with street-walkers, implying a suspicion that they were not of a moral tendency, Johnson expressed the highest indignation that any other motive could ever be suspected. As for the separation from his wife (mentioned by Sir John Hawkins), that might have proceeded from some other cause.

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* This ought to be read with great abatement, for the reasons given above (p. 50). Garrick, by his caricature mimickry, could turn the most respectable characters and unaffected manners into ridicule. BISHOP PERCY.

both, we may believe, exposed themselves to ridicule.

In 1740 he contributed to the "Gentleman's Magazine" the *Preface;* the *Life of Admiral Blake,* and the first parts of the *Lives of Sir Francis Drake,* and of *Philip Barretier;* both which he finished the year after; an *Essay on Epitaphs,* his earliest detached piece of criticism; and an *Epitaph on Charles Claudius Phillips, an itinerant musician,* a very beautiful, and almost extemporaneous imitation of an epitaph on the same person, in Wolverhampton church, written by Dr Wilkes, and recited by Garrick *.

In 1741 he wrote for the "Gentleman's Magazine" the *Preface;* conclusion of the *Lives of Drake* and *Barretier;* "A free translation of the Jests of Hierocles, with an Introduction;" "Debate on the Humble Petition and Advice of the Rump Parliament to Cromwell, to assume the title of King, abridged,

* The concluding couplet of the original is remarkable, as it is the germ of Johnson's concluding line.

"Rest here, in peace, till Angels bid thee rise,
And meet thy Saviour's *consort* in the skies."

methodized, and digested;" "Translation of Abbé Guyon's Dissertation on the Amazons;" "Translation of Fontenelle's Panegyric on Dr Morin;" and the *Parliamentary Debates*, solely, without the assistance of Guthrie.

In 1742 he wrote for the "Gentleman's Magazine" the *Preface;* the *Parliamentary Debates; Essay on the Account of the Conduct of the Duchess of Marlborough*, then the popular topic of conversation; *The Life of Peter Burman; Additions to his Life of Barretier; The Life of Sydenham*, afterwards prefixed to Dr Swan's edition of his works; the *Foreign History*, for December; "Essay on the Description of China, from the French of Du Halde;" *Proposals for printing Bibliotheca Harleiana; or, a Catalogue of the Library of the Earl of Oxford;* afterwards, with some enlargement, prefixed as a *Preface* to the first volume of the *Bibliotheca Harleiana*, in 5 vols. 8vo.

In the business of compiling a descriptive catalogue of the immense library of the Earl of Oxford, he was employed, with singular propriety, by Mr Thomas Osborne, bookseller.

in Gray's Inn; who purchased it for L.13,000; a sum which, according to Mr Oldys, who had been librarian to the Earl, was not more than the binding of the books had cost; yet the slowness of the sale was such, that there was not much gained by it. In this laborious undertaking he was assisted by Mr Mattaire, one of the masters of Westminster-School, who furnished some hints for the classification, and supplied the Latin Dedication to Lord Carteret; and by Mr Oldys, then employed in writing for the booksellers, who, it is believed, had a share in the two first volumes; but the portion which he contributed has not been ascertained. His *Account of the Harleian library* presents a very conspicuous view of the collection, and of the plan adopted for the enumeration of its contents. What he undertook to perform was, to distribute the books into distinct classes, to arrange every class with some regard to the age of the writers, to describe every volume accurately, to enumerate the peculiarities of editions, and occasionally to intersperse observations

from the authors of literary history. The plan was executed with great ability; and what he allowed himself to hope, was fully verified. The catalogue became an object of public curiosity. It was purchased as the record of a most valuable collection, and preserved as one of the memorials of learning.

While he was employed in that business, in Gray's Inn, it has been confidently related, with many embellishments, that he knocked Osborne down in his shop with a folio, and put his foot upon his neck. Johnson himself relates it differently to Mr Boswell. "Sir, he was impertinent to me, and I beat him; but it was not in his shop, it was in my own chamber." Osborne was one of the most opulent, insolent, and ignorant of booksellers *; "a man, alike destitute of decency and shame, without sense of any disgrace but that of poverty †," who regarded Johnson as a hireling, looking up to him for the reward of his work, and re-

* See Note on the Dunciad, Book 11, v. 167.

† *Life of Pope.*

ceiving it accompanied with reproach and contumely. This anecdote has been often told to prove Johnson's ferocity; but merit cannot always take the spurns of the unworthy with patience and a forbearing spirit.

In 1743, he wrote for the "Gentleman's Magazine" the *Preface*, and the *Parliamentary Debates*, for January and February; when he found other employment; and Hawkesworth succeeded to this department. During the time he wrote the debates exclusively, the eloquence, the force of argument, and the splendour of language, displayed in the several speeches, increased the sale of the Magazine, and extended the fame and honour of the parliamentary speakers. That he was the author of the debates, towards the end of Walpole's administration, he himself avowed, many years afterwards, on hearing Dr Francis *, in company with Mr Wedderburn †, Mr Murphy, and others, commend Mr Pitt's speech, in an im-

* The translator of Horace, Demosthenes, &c.

† Afterwards Lord Loughborough and Earl of Roslin. He died January 3, 1805.

portant debate, at that period, as superior to the best oration of Demosthenes. Some passages were cited, with the approbation and applause of all present. When the warmth of praise subsided, Johnson said, "That speech I wrote in a garret in Exeter-street. I never had been in the gallery of the House of Commons but once. The notes of the arguments advanced in the course of the debate were communicated to me, and I composed the speeches in the form in which they appear in the *Parliamentary Debates*." The company were struck with astonishment, and bestowed lavish encomiums on Johnson. One, in particular, praised his impartiality, observing that he had dealt out reason and eloquence with an equal hand to both parties; "That is not quite true, said Johnson; I saved appearances tolerably well, but I took care that the WHIG DOGS should not have the best of it *." Although the speeches, in the course of events, have lost their original interest, yet they possess intrinsic excellence; and, as orations on subjects of public import-

* Murphy's Essay, &c. p. 45.

ance, deserve the attention of parliamentary speakers *

The same year he wrote for the "Gentleman's Magazine," *Considerations on the Dispute between Crousaz and Warburton, on Pope's Essay on Man;* in which he defends Crousaz; and reviews the argument, and repels the contempt of his adversary with acuteness of reasoning and temperance of language; *Ad Lauram parituram Epigramma* †; *Ad ornatissimam Puellam* ‡; *A Latin translation of Pope's Verses on his Grotto;* an exquisitely beautiful *Ode on Friendship,* and an *Advertisement* for Osborne, recommending a subscription for reprinting a selection from the Harleian library of such "small tracts and fugitive pieces, as were of the great-

* The *Parliamentary Debates* were collected and reprinted for J. Stockdale, in 2 vols. 8vo, 1787.

† Mr Hector was present when this epigram was made *impromptu.* The first line was proposed by Dr James, and Johnson was called upon by the company to finish it.

‡ In the "Gentleman's Magazine" for 1744, p. 46, the following epigram was inserted, *Ad Authorem Carminis,* in answer to this elegant Latin ode:

"O cui non potuit, quia culta placere puella,
Qui speras Musam posse placere tuam."

est value, or most scarce," under the title of the *Harleian Miscellany*. This useful design met with liberal encouragement from the collectors and lovers of books; and many valuable tracts and scarce pamphlets, scattered through this vast library, " too small to preserve themselves," were united into volumes, and " secured by their combination with others in a certain residence."

The same year he wrote for his school-fellow, Dr James's " Medicinal Dictionary," in 3 vols. folio, the *Dedication to Dr Mead*, which is conceived with great address to conciliate the patronage of that very eminent man. He had also written, or assisted in writing, the *proposals* for this work; and being very fond of the study of physic, in which Dr James was his master, he furnished some of the articles.

At this time his circumstances were much embarrassed; yet such was his liberal affection for his mother, that he took upon himself a debt of her's, to Mr Levett of Lichfield, which, though only twelve pounds, was then considerable to him.

In 1744 he wrote the *Preface* for the Gentleman's Magazine, and *An Essay on the origin and importance of Small Tracts and Fugitive Pieces*, as the Introduction to the *Harleian Miscellany*, which was completed, with great diligence and perseverance, and published in 8 vols. 4to, in 1749 *. The selection of the pamphlets of which it was composed was made by Mr Oldys, a man of active and liberal curiosity, accurate knowledge, and indefatigable diligence, to whom English literature owes many obligations.

Being disengaged from Osborne, he published a new work of biography; a branch of literature that he delighted to cultivate, as it employed his powers of reflection, and correct knowledge of human life and manners. This was the *Life of Savage*, which he had announced his intention of writing in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for August 1743.

* An enlarged edition of this curious and valuable collection is passing the press, superintended by Mr Park, whose bibliographical acumen and skill are the least of his many amiable and elegant accomplishments.

In a note to Mr Urban, without a signature, he intreats him "to inform the public, that the life of the unfortunate and ingenious *Mr Savage* will speedily be published, by a person who was favoured with his confidence, and received from himself an account of most of the transactions which he proposes to mention, to the time of his retirement to Swansea in Wales. From that period to his death, in the prison of Bristol, the account will be continued from materials still less liable to objection; his own letters, and those of his friends, &c." It is said by Sir John Hawkins, that he composed the whole of this beautiful and instructive piece of biography in thirty-six hours. But Mr Boswell states, upon Johnson's own authority, that he composed forty-eight of the present octavo pages at a sitting, but that he sat up all night. It came out in February 1744, from the shop of Roberts in Warwick-Lane, who, in April following, republished his *Life of Barretier* in a separate pamphlet. It was no sooner published, than the following liberal praise was given to it in

"The Champion," which was copied into the "Gentleman's Magazine" for April, and confirmed by the approbation of the public.

"This pamphlet is, without flattery to its author, as just and well-written a piece of its kind as I ever saw. It is certainly penned with equal accuracy and spirit; of which I am so much the better judge, as I knew many of the facts to be strictly true, and very fairly related. It is a very amusing, and withal a very instructive and valuable performance. The author's observations are short, significant, and just, as his narrative is remarkably smooth and well disposed. His reflections open to all the recesses of the human heart; and, in a word, a more just or pleasant, a more engaging, or a more instructive treatise on all the excellencies and defects of human nature, is scarce to be found in our own, or perhaps any other, language *".

* This eulogium has been supposed to be written by Fielding; but most probably by Ralph, who succeeded Fielding in his share of the "Champion" before the date of the paper.

The strongest proof of the powerful interest with which the style of Johnson had surrounded the singular misfortunes and truly eccentric character of Savage, was given by Sir Joshua Reynolds, who told Mr Boswell, that, upon his return from Italy, he met with the book in Devonshire, knowing nothing of its author, and began to read it while he was standing with his arm leaning against a chimney-piece. It seized his attention so strongly, that, not being able to lay down the book till he had finished it, when he attempted to move, he found his arm totally benumbed *.

Johnson had now lived nearly half his days, without friends or lucrative profession; he had toiled and laboured, yet still, as he himself expresses it, was "to provide for the day that was passing over him." Of the profession of an unfriended author he saw the danger and the difficulties. Amhurst †, Savage,

* Boswell's Life, &c. Vol. i. p. 139.

† The able assistant of Bolingbroke and Pulteney, in writing the celebrated weekly paper called "The Craftsman." Upon the famous compromise of 1742,

Boyse*, Oldys†, and others who had laboured in literature, without emerging from distress, were recent examples, and clouded his prospect.

To escape the common fate of "scholars, a race of mortals formed for dependence ‡;" he had, at an early period of his literary career, projected various publications, which he conceived would extend his fame, and emancipate

no terms were stipulated by his friends for him who had been the instrument of their success. He died, soon after of a broken heart, and was indebted to the charity of Francklin, the printer, for a grave. See Ralph's "Case of Authors."

* The ingenious author of "Deity," and innumerable compilations for the booksellers, closed a life of extravagance, folly, and wretchedness, in an obscure lodging in Shoe-Lane, 1749, and was buried at the charge of the parish. See "Works of the British Poets," Vol. X. Edinburgh, 1795.

† This learned antiquary and industrious biographer subsisted by writing for the booksellers. At the period of his engagement with Osborne, he was so much straitened in circumstances as to have the misfortune to suffer the restraint of his person in the Fleet. When he died, in 1761, his books, with marginal notes, and manuscript collections, were sold for the payment of his debts.

‡ *Life of Frederick, King of Prussia.*

him from the necessity of labouring under the direction of booksellers. Sir John Hawkins has preserved a list of literary projects, not less than thirty-nine articles, some of them of immense extent, which afford a curious and interesting proof of his great knowledge of books and general literature, and strongly illustrate the fertility and resources of his mind *. This catalogue he continued through life to enlarge; but it cannot be recorded without regret, that such was his want of encouragement, or the versatility of his temper, that not one of all his noble and useful projects was ever executed.

A new edition of Shakespeare now occurred to him; and as a prelude to it, in April 1745, he published an anonymous pamphlet, intitled, *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth, with Remarks on Sir Thomas Hanmer's edition of Shakespeare; to which is affixed, Proposals for a new edition of Shakespeare, with a Specimen*, 8vo. The *Proposals* were published by Cave. The work was to have been printed in ten small volumes, price L.1, 5s. in sheets.

* See Appendix.

The notice of the public was, however, not excited to his anonymous proposals for the execution of a task which Warburton was known to have undertaken: the project, therefore, died at that time, to revive at a future period; probably in consequence of the following letter from Tonson the bookseller, to Cave, dated April 11, 1745.

"I have seen a proposal of yours for printing an edition of Shakespeare, which I own much surprised me; but I suppose you are misled by the edition lately printed at Oxford, and that you think it is a copy any one has a right to. If so, you are very much mistaken; and if you call on me any afternoon about four or five o'clock, I doubt not I can shew you such a title as will satisfy you, not only as to the original copy, but likewise to all the emendations to this time; and I will then give my reasons why we rather chuse to proceed with the University by way of reprisal, for their scandalous invasion of our rights, than by law; which reasons will not hold good as to any other persons who shall take the same liberty. As you are a man of character, I had rather satisfy

you of our right by argument than by the expence of a Chancery suit; which will be the method we shall take with any one who shall attack our property in this or any other copy that we have fairly bought and paid for," &c.

For the temporary obstruction, from whatever cause, to his projected edition of Shakespeare, he was consoled by the flattering attention bestowed on his pamphlet. Even the supercilious Warburton, in the "Preface" to his Shakespeare, published two years afterwards, had the candour to exempt it from his general censure "of those things which have been published under the titles of 'Essays,' 'Remarks,' 'Observations,' &c. on 'Shakespeare," and spoke of it as the work of "a man of great parts and genius." This obligation Johnson always acknowledged in terms of gratitude. "He praised me," said he, "at a time when praise was of value to me."

As an instance of the little occasional advantages which, as an author by profession, he did not disdain to take by the exercise of his pen, he this year accepted a gratuity from Dr Samuel Madden, a name which Ireland

ought to honour *, for correcting his poem, entitled, "Boulter's Monument; a Panegyrical Poem, sacred to the memory of that great and excellent prelate and patriot, the most Rev. Dr Hugh Boulter, late Lord Archbishop of Armagh, and Primate of all Ireland." Printed by S. Richardson, 8vo, 1745. In his recollections concerning the author, at a subsequent period, in conversation with his countryman Dr Thomas Campbell †, he said, "when Dr Madden came to London, he submitted that work to my castigation; and I remember I blotted a great many lines, and might have blotted a great many more, without making the poem worse. However, the Doctor was very thankful, and

* He was the author of the premium-scheme in the University of Dublin, for the advancement of learning, and the founder of the Dublin Society, for the improvement of Agriculture, Arts, Manufactures, &c. See p. 81. His poem, of which Johnson requested Dr Campbell to procure him a copy, is extremely scarce, and seems to have eluded the diligence of Bishop Percy.

† Author of "A Philosophical Survey," and "Strictures on the Ecclesiastical and Literary History of Ireland;" which co-operate with the "Antiquities" of Dr Ledwich, in illustrating, by rational researches, the authentic history and antiquities of that island. He died in 1795.

very generous, for he gave me ten guineas; *which was to me at that time a great sum**." This splendid tribute of gratitude to the memory of the benevolent Primate of Ireland †, bears a strong impression of the pen of Johnson in many passages.

In the year 1746, which was marked by a civil war in Britain, when a rash attempt was made to restore the house of Stuart to the throne, his literary career appears to have been almost totally suspended. His attachment to that unfortunate family is well known. Some may imagine that a sympathetic anxiety impeded the exertion of his intellectual powers; but it is probable that he was, during that time, employed upon his *Shakespeare*, or sketching the outlines of his *Dictionary of the English Language;* a project which had occupied the wits of Queen Anne's reign, and had long been the object of his contemplation.

Having formed and digested the plan of his great philological work, which might then be

* Boswell's Life, &c. Vol. i. p. 280.

† He spent a long life "in honouring his Maker and doing good to men;" and left his fortune, when he died, 1742, to charitable uses. The whole of his donations, public and private, make near L.100,000.

esteemed one of the *desiderata* of English literature, he communicated it to the public in 1747, in a pamphlet entitled, *The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language, addressed to the Right Honourable Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield, one of his Majesty's Secretaries of State.* The hint of undertaking this national work is said to have been first suggested to Johnson several years before this period, by Dodsley; but he told Mr Boswell, that "it had grown upon his mind insensibly." The booksellers who contracted with him for the execution of it were Mr Robert Dodsley, Mr Charles Hitch, Mr Andrew Millar, the two Messrs. Longman, and the two Messrs. Knapton. The price stipulated was L.1575, part of which was to be from time to time advanced, in proportion to the progress of the work.

The *Plan* is written with peculiar exactness and perspicuity of method, and exhibits a very distinct view of what he proposed to execute; "a dictionary, by which the pronunciation of our language may be fixed, and its attainment facilitated; by which its purity may be preserved, its use ascertained, and its duration

lengthened." It has not only the substantial merit of comprehension, perspicuity, and precision, but the language of it is unexceptionably excellent; and never was there a more dignified strain of compliment than that in which he courts the attention of Chesterfield. a nobleman celebrated for his eloquence, his wit, and the graces of polite behaviour; who was very ambitious of literary distinction, and who, upon being informed of the design of so great and desirable a work, had expressed himself in terms very favourable to its success. "The way in which," he told Mr Boswell, "it came to be inscribed to Lord Chesterfield was this: I had neglected to write it by the time appointed. Dodsley suggested a desire to have it addressed to Lord Chesterfield. I laid hold of this as a pretext for delay, that it might be better done, and let Dodsley have his desire." The *Plan* itself, however, proves that the Earl not only favoured the design, but that there had been a particular communication with his Lordship concerning it, and that he had been persuaded to believe he would be a respectable patron.

"With regard to questions of purity and propriety," he says, "I have been determined by your Lordship's opinion to interpose my own judgment; and I may hope, that since you, whose authority in our language is so generally acknowledged, have commissioned me to declare my opinion, I shall be considered as exercising a kind of vicarious jurisdiction." The manuscript got accidentally into the hands of Mr Whitehead, afterwards poet-laureat; through whose intervention it was communicated to Chesterfield; the consequence was an invitation from his Lordship to Johnson. Visits were repeated; but the reception was discouraging, and finally repulsive. The connection between the uncourtly scholar, towering in the pride of genius and independence, and the accomplished courtier, fashioned into the perfection of elegance of manners and artificial grace, was unnatural, and terminated in mutual disgust. Johnson expected the patronage of the Mæcenas of literature, "fed with soft dedications," and "puffed by every quill," and was dissappointed; but he proceeded, with undaunted spirit, in the execution

of his laborious task, confiding in his own abilities, and looking forward to the approbation of the public as his best reward.

The irreconcileable difference in manners and principles between Chesterfield and Johnson, is strongly expressed in the character given by that nobleman of his visitor, in one of his "Letters to his Son."

"There is a man, whose moral character, deep learning, and superior parts, I acknowledge, admire, and respect; but whom it is so impossible for me to love, that I am almost in a fever whenever I am in his company. His figure (without being deformed) seems made to disgrace or ridicule the common structure of the human body. His legs and arms are never in the position which, according to the situation of his body, they ought to be in, but constantly employed in committing acts of hostility upon the graces. He throws anywhere but down his throat whatever he means to drink, and mangles what he means to carve. Inattentive to all the regards of social life, he mistimes and misplaces every thing. He disputes

with heat and indiscriminately, mindless of the rank, character, and situation of those with whom he disputes. Absolutely ignorant of the several gradations of familiarity and respect, he is exactly the same to his superiors, his equals, and his inferiors; and, therefore, by a necessary consequence, is absurd to two of the three. Is it possible to love such a man? No. The utmost I can do for him is, to consider him a respectable Hottentot *".

He had lodged with his wife in the obscure courts and alleys about the Strand; but, to enable him to carry on his vast undertaking, and to have a convenient intercourse with his printer, Mr Strahan, he now hired a handsome house in Gough-square, Fleet-street; fitted up one of the upper rooms after the manner of a counting-house, and employed six amanuenses there in transcribing; five of whom were natives of North Britain, the two Messrs Macbean, the elder, author of "A System of Ancient Geography," Mr Shiels, the principal collector and digester of the materials for the

* Letter CCXII.

"Lives of the Poets," to which the name of Mr Cibber is prefixed *; Mr Stewart, son of Mr George Stewart, bookseller in Edinburgh, and a Mr Maitland; the sixth was Mr Peyton, a French master, who published some elementary tracts. In furnishing the copyists their several tasks, he observed, according to Mr Boswell, the following process †. The words,

* Johnson believed that Shiels was the sole author of these Lives *(Life of Hammond)*, misled, no doubt, by partial and wrong information. His account of the matter has been clearly disproved in the "Monthly Review" for May 1792. Shiels, it appears, had quarrelled with Cibber, his Whiggish supervisor, for scouting his Jacobitical and Tory politics; and it is natural to suppose that he told his story in his own way. To this painful labourer Johnson shewed unceasing kindness. He was bred a mechanic; and, destitute of education, but not destitute of genius. He is the author of "Beauty, a Poem," printed in Pearch's Collection, "Marriage, a Poetical Essay," and "Musidorus, an Elegy on the Death of Thomson," whose manner he studied. He died of a consumption.

† The account of the manner in which Johnson compiled his Dictionary, as given by Mr Boswell, is confused and erroneous; and a moment's reflection will convince every person of judgment could not be correct; for, to write down an alphabetical arrangement of all the words

partly taken from other dictionaries, and partly supplied by himself, having been first written down, with spaces left between them, he deli-

in the English language, and then hunt through the whole compass of English literature for all their different significations, would have taken the whole life of any individual; but Johnson, who, among other peculiarities of his character, excelled most men in contriving the best means to accomplish any end, devised the following mode for completing his Dictionary, as he himself expressly described to the writer of this account. He began his task by devoting his first care to a diligent perusal of all such English writers as were most correct in their language, and under every sentence which he meant to quote, he drew a line, and noted in the margin the first letter of the word under which it was to occur. He then delivered these books to his clerks, who transcribed each sentence on a separate slip of paper, and arranged the same under the word referred to. By these means he collected the several words and their different significations; and when the whole arrangement was alphabetically formed, he gave the definitions of their meanings, and collected their etymologies from Skinner, Junius, and other writers on the subject. In completing his alphabetical arrangement, he, no doubt, would recur to former dictionaries, to see if any words had escaped him; but this, which Mr Boswell makes the first step in the business, was in reality the last; and it was doubtless to this happy arrangement that Johnson effected in a few years what employed the foreign academies nearly half a century. BISHOP PERCY.

vered in writing their etymologies, definitions, and various significations. The authorities were copied from the books themselves, in which he had marked the passages with a black lead pencil, the traces of which could easily be effaced. The models which Johnson followed, in the formation of his work were, the "Vocabulario" of the Academia della Crusca, and the "Dictionnaire" of the French Academicians; both works of national utility, closely connected with the honour of the countries in which they were undertaken, and reflecting credit on the associated individuals by whom they were completed.

In the progress of this great compilation, which was to fix and elucidate his native language, and form the stable foundation of his philological fame, the intervals of individual exertion were sufficient to allow of occasional composition, very different from lexicography.

He contributed to the "Gentleman's Magazine" for May this year *A Translation of a Latin Epitaph on Sir Thomas Hanmer*; To Miss ——,*

* The Latin is said to be written by Dr Freind.

on her giving the author a gold and silk net-work purse of her own weaving; Stella in Mourning; The Winter's Walk; Spring, an Ode; and *To Lyce, an elderly Lady,* distinguished by three asterisks. In the Magazine for December he inserted an *Ode on Winter,* which is one of the best of his lyric compositions.

In September this year, his fortunate pupil, Garrick, having become joint-patentee and manager of Drury-Lane Theatre, he furnished him with a *Prologue, spoken at the opening of the Theatre Royal;* which, for just and manly dramatic criticism, as well as for poetical excellence, is unrivalled by any composition of that kind in our language, except Pope's prologue to "Cato." It traces the varied fortunes of the English stage, and the wild vicissitudes of dramatic taste, from the time of Shakespeare and Jonson to their decline, when the writers of pantomime and song confirmed the sway of Folly; and exhorts the audience to encourage the new manager; under whose direction it was predicted, that

the reign of Nature and of Sense would revive, and scenic Virtue form the rising age. Like the celebrated epilogue to "The distressed Mother," it was, during the season, often called for by the audience; and the most striking passages of it are familiar to all the lovers of the drama and of poetry.

In 1748, while the *Dictionary* was going forwards, he formed a club that met at Horseman's chop-house in Ivy-Lane, Pater-noster-row, every Tuesday evening, with a view to enjoy literary discussion, and the pleasure of animated relaxation. The members associated with him in this little society were Dr Richard Bathurst, a young physician, Mr (afterwards Dr) Hawkesworth, Dr Salter, father of the late master of the Charter-house, Mr Ryland, a merchant, Mr John Payne, bookseller in Pater-noster-row, Mr Samuel Dyer, a learned young man, intended for the dissenting ministry, Dr William M'Ghie, a Scottish physician, Dr Edmund Barker, a young physician, and Mr (afterwards Sir)

John Hawkins, an attorney*; all men of much respectablity, several of whom afterwards attained considerable eminence in the literary world. As the majority of the club were Whigs, it required, on the part of those members, who considered themselves as his disciples, some degree of compliance with his political prejudices. He was most intimately connected with Mr Dyer and Dr Bathurst, both men of great moral worth, of highly cultivated understanding, and graced with pleasing manners. The endowments of Mr Dyer are represented by Sir John Hawkins as of such a superior kind, "that in some instances Johnson might almost be said to have looked up to him." Keen penetration and deep erudition were the qualities that distinguished his character. He was a pupil of Hutcheson of Glasgow, and maintained his notion of moral goodness, "that to live in peace with man-

* He was afterwards chairman of the Middlesex justices, and knighted upon occasion of presenting an address to the king. He is the author of a valuable "History of Music," in 5 vols. 4to, and editor of Walton's "Complete Angler." He died in 1791.

kind, and in a temper to do good offices, is the most essential part of our duty*." They used to dispute about the *moral sense* and the *fitness of things;* but Johnson was not uniform in his opinions; at one time *good,* at another *evil,* was predominant in the moral constitution of the world; contending as often for victory as for truth. This infirmity attended him through life. Dr Bathurst was a native of Jamaica, the son of Colonel Bathurst, a planter in that island. He loved and admired him for the sweetness of his disposition, the elegance of his manners, and the brilliancy of his talents. In the practice of physic he was unsuccessful; for though his qualifications, natural and acquired, were unexceptionable, he wanted not only fortune, but interest; without which no ability, however great, has in general been found availing in this profession. This is the first convivial association to which Johnson can be traced out of his own house.

* He was employed in revising the old translation of "Plutarch's Lives, by several hands," for Draper and Tonson.

For the enjoyment of scenes of social life, unfettered by the restraints of domestic regulation, he had a peculiar relish. A tavern chair, he would assert, was the throne of peace and felicity. He could there act with the independence which he loved; and to this mode of collecting his friends he was partial to the end of his life.

This year he contributed to the "Gentleman's Magazine" for May, *The Life of Roscommon,* which he afterwards enlarged in his *Lives of the Poets.* He wrote also the *Preface* to Dodsley's "Preceptor," containing a general sketch of that valuable work, with a short and perspicuous recommendation of each article; and the *Vision of Theodore, the Hermit of Teneriffe, found in his cell,* a most beautiful allegory of human life, under the figure of ascending the Mountain of Existence; which he himself always esteemed the best of his writings; and it is indeed truly excellent.

In January 1749, eleven years after the publication of his *London,* he gave to the world his second imitation of the Roman satirist,

entitled, *The Vanity of Human Wishes, the tenth Satire of Juvenal imitated*, 4to, with his name. Though his fame had been advancing progressively, in the space which had elapsed between the two classical imitations, yet he got from Dodsley only fifteen guineas for the copy of this poem, reserving to himself, in the agreement, according to his custom, "the right of printing one edition;" it being his fixed intention to publish, at some period, for his own profit, a complete collection of his works. The fervid rapidity with which it was produced is scarcely credible. Mr Boswell heard him say, that he composed seventy lines of it in one day, without putting one of them upon paper till they were finished. Dryden preceded him in attempting an imitation of the tenth satire of Juvenal; and though he failed in giving the general merit of the original, yet he rivals the Latin poet in many passages. The imitation of Johnson challenges a comparison with the page of Juvenal in every line, and, in some instances, surpasses the most perfect composi-

tion of the Roman satirist; particularly in the pious and consolatory conclusion of the satire. It has less of common life and party exaggeration, and more of philosophic dignity and sublime morality than his *London*. It is characterized by profound reflection and pious instruction, more than pointed spirit and poetic fire. It is, however, inferior to no classical imitation in our language, and is certainly as great an effort of ethic poetry as any language can show. The instances of variety of disappointment are chosen so judiciously, and painted so strongly, that the whole has the air of an original; and, to be understood, requires not to be compared with its archetype. That of the scholar, representing the usual fate of the profession of literature, the most useful and laborious of any, as productive of no solid advantage or true glory, is drawn in his strongest manner, from the conviction of a mind sharpened by the experience of want and neglect, and indignant at the inadequate recompence of cultivated genius and learned toil.

"Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
And pause a while from letters, to be wise;
There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron *, *and the jail.*"

On the 6th of February this year, his tragedy of *Irene*, which had been long kept back for want of encouragement, was brought upon the stage at Drury-lane by the kindness of Garrick. A violent dispute arose between him and the manager, relative to the alterations necessary to be made to fit it for the theatre. The poet for a long time refused to submit his lines to the critical amputation of the actor, and the latter was obliged to apply to Dr Taylor to become a mediator in the dispute. Johnson's pride at length gave way to alterations; but whether to the full extent of the manager's wishes is not known. Dr Adams was present the first night of the representation, and gave Mr Boswell the following ac-

* Altered from "*the garret*," in the earlier editions, after he found reason to disclaim the patronage of Chesterfield. The alterations are inconsiderable.

count: "Before the curtain drew up, there were catcalls whistling, which alarmed Johnson's friends. The *Prologue*, which was written by himself, in a manly strain, soothed the audience, and the play went off tolerably till it came to the conclusion, when Mrs Pritchard, the heroine of the piece, was to be strangled upon the stage, and to speak two lines with the bow-string round her neck. The audience cried out, 'Murder! murder!' She several times attempted to speak, but in vain. At last she was obliged to go off the stage alive." This offence was removed after the first night, and *Irene* carried off, to be put to death behind the scenes, as the play now has it. Though the whole force of the theatre was employed in the principal parts, and every advantage of magnificent scenery and splendid and well-chosen dresses supplied by the zeal of the manager, yet the representation of the tragedy of *Irene* did not please the public. It was acted, without any direct interruption being given to the representation, thirteen

nights * successively, and has not since that time been exhibited on any stage. He had the profits of the author's three benefit nights, the amount of which, it is believed, was considerable; and Dodsley gave him a hundred pounds for the copy, with his usual reservation of the right of an edition. The *Prologue*, which, according to Dr Adams, "soothed the audience," seems more likely to have awed his judges, as he professes, with emphatic solemnity, to "scorn the meek address" and "suppliant strain," and relies, with a lofty spirit and dignified pride, on the unprejudiced decision of "Reason, Nature, and Truth." For the "Epilogue," an unworthy appendage to the piece, the author, fortunately for his fame, is not answerable, as he told Mr Boswell it was the production of Sir William Yonge, a famous wit and parliamentary orator of that time. The acceptance of the obligation is

* From the 6th to the 20th February inclusive. See "Gentleman's Magazine" for February 1749. According to Sir John Hawkins and Mr Boswell, it reached but to a *ninth* night's performance.

remarkable, as the name of the writer of the *jeu d'esprit* does not appear in conjunction with that of the author of the tragedy upon any other occasion. Johnson attended the theatre every night during the performance of his play; and conceiving that his character, as a dramatic author, required some distinction of dress, he appeared behind the scenes, and even in one of the side-boxes, in a scarlet waistcoat, with rich gold lace, and a gold-laced hat. He used to give a pleasant description of this green-room finery, in his social hours; but concluded with great gravity, "I soon laid aside my gold-laced hat, lest it should make me proud."

In the unfavourable decision of the public upon his tragedy, Johnson acquiesced without a murmur. He was convinced that he had not the talents necessary to write successfully for the stage, and never made another attempt in that species of composition.

Towards the close of this year, he unfortunately appeared in connection with Lauder, the defamer of Milton, and, in a moment of

delusion, unconsciously co-operated in the fraud of an impostor, by writing the *Preface* and *Postscript* to "An Essay on Milton's Use and Imitation of the Moderns, in his Paradise Lost," printed for Messrs Payne and Bouquet, Paternoster-row, 8vo, 1750; a book made up of gross forgeries, and published to impose upon mankind. The contriver of this extraordinary imposture was a man of respectable literary attainments and considerable ingenuity, but of a temper soured by early misfortune, and the failure of repeated attempts to succeed to a professor's chair, and afterwards to the office of librarian in the university of Edinburgh. Among other expedients to enable him to support himself in freedom from the miseries of indigence, he published an edition of Dr Arthur Johnston's version of the Psalms *, for the use of the grammar

* In a collection of poetical paraphrases of sacred scripture, entitled, "Poetarum Scotorum Musæ Sacræ," &c. 2 tom. 8vo, Edinb. 1739. In the preface to this collection, the editor pronounced a high and honourable panegyric on the great poet, whose just reputation he afterwards endeavoured to subvert. "Virorum maximus,

schools in Scotland, under the patronage of the General Assembly of the Church; by the sale of which he expected to improve his little fortune, and establish an annual income. But his credit and his interest were completely blasted, or thought to be blasted, according to his own account, by a distich of Pope, in which he ridicules Mr Benson, who had distinguished himself by his fondness for the same version, of which he printed many fine editions, and places Johnston in a contemptuous comparison with the author of "Paradise Lost;" to whose memory by erecting monuments and striking coins, he endeavoured to raise himself to fame.

JOANNES MILTONUS, poeta celeberrimus, non Angliæ modo, soli natalis, verum generis humani ornamentum, cujus eximius liber, Anglicanis versibus conscriptus, vulgo PARADISUS AMISSUS, immortalis illud ingenii monumentum, cum ipsa fere æternitate perennaturum est opus!—Hujus memoriam Anglorum primus, post tantum, proh dolor! ab tanti excessu poetæ intervallum, statua eleganti, nempe in loco celeberrimo, cœnobio Westmonasteniensi, posita, regum, principum, antistitum, illustriumque Angliæ virorum cœmeterio, vir ornatissimus, Gulielmus Benson prosecutus est. P. x. xiv.

On two unequal crutches propp'd he came,
MILTON'S on this, on that *one* JOHNSTON'S name *.

Pope's mention of Johnston, the object of Mr Benson's extravagant admiration, as a foil to a better poet, condemned, as Lauder affirms, his edition of the unfortunate Latin paraphrast to the shelf. From that time, the reputation of Johnston sunk in the schools; and Buchanan regained, without opposition, his classical pre-eminence †. On this occasion it was natural for his panegyrist not to be pleased; and his resentment, seeking to discharge itself some where, was unhappily directed against Milton; though, in a rational view of his resentment, it would have been more naturally directed against Pope. Driven by necessity to London, to seek employment as a Latin teacher, he resolved to stigmatise Milton as a plagiary; and commenced the attack on his originality, in 1747, in various communications to the "Gentle-

* Dunciad, Book IV. v. 109.

† See Dr Irving's "Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Buchanan," p. 129, 130, Edinburgh, 8vo, 1807.

man's Magazine," which escaped detection. His imitation of the moderns he endeavoured to establish, by producing a variety of extracts from "Paradise Lost," with analogous passages from several modern, but obscure Latin poets, *Masenius, Staphorstius, Taubmannus, Catsius, Quintianus*, &c. He had the shameless audacity to interpolate the passages which he extracted from these writers with entire lines, either translated from "Paradise Lost," or literally taken from Hog's version of that poem. Nobody suspected the fidelity of his quotations; and the impostor, emboldened by the success of his atrocious efforts, ventured to collect "the specimens in favour of this argument," with additions, into a volume, and audaciously dedicated the whole "To the learned Universities of Oxford and Cambridge," with this motto, "Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme." While his work was in the press, the proof sheets were submitted to the inspection of the Ivy-Lane club by Mr Payne the bookseller; "and I could all along observe," says Sir John Hawkins, "that Johnson seemed

to approve, not only of the design, but of the argument, and seemed to exult in the persuasion, that the reputation of Milton was likely to suffer by this discovery. That he was not privy to the imposture I am well persuaded; but that he wished well to the argument, must be inferred from the *Preface*, which indubitably was written by Johnson." If Johnson approved of the design, and assisted the impostor with his masterly pen, it was no longer than while he believed the information to be true; nor can any thing be fairly inferred from the *Preface*, but that he was pleased, as a scholar and a critic, with an investigation which gratified his literary curiosity and love of truth. That he had imbibed strong prejudices against Milton cannot be denied; and it may allowed that his dislike of the politician might incline him to view the supposed discovery of the extensive plagiarism of the poet with some degree of complacency. For his easy faith in believing the imputed calumny, without examination, he is liable to some censure; but it would be unwarrantable to charge the departed moralist

with being an abettor of the base artificer of falsehood. The charitable propensities of his heart, without the least tincture of personal malice, are demonstrated incontrovertibly in the *Postscript*, written for the purpose of recommending a subscription for the relief of a grand-daughter of the author of "Paradise Lost," when he was not aware of the forgeries practised by the enemy of his fame. He thought the man "too frantic to be fraudulent;" mistaking the dissembled rage of selfish design for the language of warm zeal and strong conviction. With the rest of the club he was for a time in one common error, which he retained no longer than he was undeceived by the detection of his iniquity. The fidelity of his quotations began to be doubted by several people. Inquiry was roused; the shade which began to gather on the splendour of Milton dispersed; and detection and infamy speedily overtook the wretched impostor. Mr Richardson, of Clare-Hall, produced a defence of the originality of the poet, entitled, "Zoilo-mastix, or a "Vindication of Milton," in 1750; and Mr

Bowle *, rector of Idmestone, distinguished himself by an early appearance on the same side. But the complete discomfiture of the champion of falsehood was reserved for his countryman, Dr Douglas, rector of Eaton Constantine, Salop, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury. A masterly defence of the injured poet proceeded from his pen, towards the close of the year, in a letter to the Earl of Bath, entitled, "Milton vindicated from the charge of plagiarism brought against him by Mr Lauder, and Lauder himself convicted of several forgeries and gross impositions on the public," 8vo, 1751 †. In this pamphlet, the able and triumphant detector of the forgeries

* Author of "A Letter to the Rev. Dr Percy, concerning a new and classical edition of "Don Quixote," 4to, 1777; and editor of "Marston's Satires," 12mo, 1765; "Don Quixote," in Spanish, 6 vols. 4to, 1783, &c. He died in 1788.

† A new edition of this pamphlet, with the title of "Milton no Plagiary" &c. was printed in 1756. Bishop Douglas was a native of Kirkaldy, in Fifeshire. Having distinguished himself as a sound critic, in detecting the forgeries of Lauder, he displayed his love of truth, with the same candour and tenderness, in detecting the im-

of Lauder very candidly bears testimony to the integrity of the writer of the *Preface* and *Postcript.* "It is to be hoped, nay it is *expected,* that the elegant and nervous writer, whose judicious sentiments and inimitable style point out the author of Lauder's *Preface* and *Postscript,* will no longer allow one *to plume himself with his feathers,* who appears so little to have deserved his assistance; an assistance which I am persuaded would never have been communicated, had there been the least suspicion of these facts which I have been the instrument of conveying to the world *." As soon as Dr Douglas espoused the cause of

posture of Bower, his countryman, in his "Lives of the Popes," and his connection with the Jesuits. His services to truth and to literature are recorded by Goldsmith, among the characteristic epitaphs, in his "Retaliation."

"Here Douglas retires, from his toils to relax;
The *scourge of impostors,* the terror of quacks.—
But now he is gone, and we want a detector,—
New *Lauders* and Bowers the Tweed shall cross over,
No countryman living their tricks to discover;
Detection her taper shall quench to a spark,
And Scotchman meet Scotchman, and cheat in the dark."

* Milton Vindicated &c. p. 77.

truth, and with ability that will ever do him honour, dragged the impostor to open daylight, Johnson made ample reparation to the genius of Milton. He not only disclaimed the fraud, but insisted on the impostor confessing his offence; and for that purpose drew up a recantation, which Lauder signed and published, entitled, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr Douglas, occasioned by his Vindication of Milton*, &c. by WILLIAM LAUDER, M. A. 4to, 1751*. The frankness of this confession would have made some atonement for the baseness of the attempt, and its abject humility been deemed a sufficient punishment of the impostor, if that unhappy man had not had the folly and wickedness to retract this apology, and reassert

* After the discovery of his villainy, the publishers of his essay publicly disclaimed all connection with him. "As this man has been guilty of such a wicked imposition upon us, our friends, and the public, and is capable of so daring an avowal of it, we declare, that we will have no farther intercourse with him; and that we now sell his book only as a curiosity of fraud and interpolation, which all the ages of literature cannot parallel." Milton no Plagiary &c. Appendix.

his former accusation in an "Apology," addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, soliciting his patronage for an edition of those almost forgotten Latin poets whose works he had so grossly misapplied. This project, which does not seem to have been the remotest cause of his infamous attack on Milton, he carried into execution, and two volumes of a "Delectus Auctorum Sacrorum Miltono Facem Prælucentium," 8vo, were printed, the first in 1752, and a second in 1753; with notes, written both in Latin and English, in a style of malignant asperity, approaching to insanity. His extreme baseness was further developed in a pamphlet, entitled, "King Charles Vindicated from the Charge of Plagiarism, brought against him by Milton, and Milton himself convicted of Forgery and a gross imposition on the Public," 8vo, 1755. The design of this pamphlet was to ingratiate himself with the zealots of the royalist party, by accusing Milton, without the smallest evidence, of inserting the prayer of Pamela, in Sir Philip Sidney's "Arcadia," in an edition of the

"Eikon Basilike," with a view of fixing on Charles I. the charge of impiety. He asserts, that his enmity to Milton was occasioned by this discovery; and threatens to "reinforce the charge of plagiarism against the English poet, and to fix it upon him by irrefragable conviction, in the face of the whole world." This effort of spleen and malice was also abortive; the public detestation of this violent and fraudulent character became strongly marked; and Lauder soon afterwards retired to Barbadoes, where he died, as he had lived, an object of general contempt and abhorrence, in 1771.

In the beginning of 1750, at the time he was induced to lend his assistance to the literary imposture of Lauder, the most unfortunate occurrence of his life, he projected *The Rambler;* a work that was to exalt his name among the most distinguished teachers of moral and religious wisdom, and stamp a durable impression of novelty and originality of composition on the language and style of the present age. He had weighed in his mind the difficulty and the danger of attempting a periodical

paper after "The Spectator;" and was not deterred, by the failure of the intermediate efforts of his predecessors, to rival the productions of Addison and Steele, from entering into a noble competition with the great masters of periodic composition *. In this arduous undertaking, for the use and honour of the nation, and the improvement of his native language, he courted no assistance "from the race that write," and the provision of materials which his *Common-Place Book* supplied was soon exhausted. He relied entirely on the resources of his own strong and devout mind, and the special protection of the Divine Being, "who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge;" which he implored in the following prayer, composed by himself on the occasion:

* Of the numerous periodical papers which appeared and disappeared in the interval between the close of the "Tatler," "Spectator," and "Guardian," many were confined to politics, and none were written with any considerable portion of the spirit, style, and dramatic contrivance of these standard works, with the exception of "The Lay Monastery," "The Free-Thinker," "and "The Plain-Dealer," which have not been often reprinted, and are seldom met with or read.

"Almighty God, the giver of all good things, without whose help all labour is ineffectual, and without whose grace all wisdom is folly, grant, I beseech Thee, that in this undertaking thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me; but that I may promote thy glory, and the salvation of myself and others: Grant this, O Lord, for the sake of thy Son Jesus Christ. Amen *."

The title of this paper seems to have been precipitately chosen, as he informed Sir Joshua Reynolds. "What *must* be done, Sir, *will* be done. When I was to begin publishing that paper I was at a loss how to name it. I sat down at night upon my bedside, and resolved that I would not go to sleep till I had fixed its title. *The Rambler* seemed the best that occurred, and I took it †." The title which seemed to

* *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 9.

† Boswell's Life, &c. Vol. i. p. 170. The Italians have translated this title by *Il Vagabondo*. A paper with the same title appeared in 1712, of which one number is preserved in the British Museum. It is probable that Johnson was ignorant of this anticipation.

him the best, when it might be his intention to make it correspond with a paper of a more familiar and sprightly tenor, is certainly susceptible of an ambiguous interpretation, and possesses no characteristic relation to a vehicle of dignified ethic precept, and grave religious instruction *.

* Mr Boswell objects to the title of *Rambler*, which he says was ill-suited to a series of grave and moral discourses, and is translated into Italian *Il Vagabondo*, as also because the same title was afterwards given to a licentious magazine. These are curious reasons. But, in the first place, Mr Boswell assumes, that Johnson intended only to write a series of papers on "grave and moral" subjects; whereas, on the contrary, he meant this periodical paper should be open for the reception of every subject, serious or sprightly, solemn or familiar, moral or amusing; and therefore endeavoured to find a title as general and unconfined as possible. He acknowledged, that "The Spectator" was the most happily chosen of all others, and "The Tatler" the next to it; and after long consideration how to fix a third title, equally capacious and suited to his purpose, he suddenly thought upon *The Rambler*, and it would be difficult to find any other that so exactly coincided with the motto he has adopted in the title-page.

"Quo me cunque rapit tempestas deferor hospes." Hor.

Bishop Percy.

Having elevated his mind, by an act of devotion, to a pious dependence on the Divine blessing on the undertaking, he commenced the publication of *The Rambler* on the 20th of March 1750, and continued it, without interruption, every Tuesday and Saturday, till the 14th of March 1752, when it closed. Each number was printed on a sheet and half of fine paper, price two-pence; sold by Mr John Payne, Paternoster-row, who agreed to give him two guineas for each number as it appeared, and to allow him a share of the profits arising from the sale when the collection appeared in volumes. Not more than five hundred copies of any one number were ever printed; of course, the bookseller, who paid Johnson four guineas a-week, which enabled him to live comfortably, did not carry on a very successful trade. His generosity and perseverance deserve to be commended; and were eventually rewarded in the multiplied editions of the collected work. While it was coming out in single numbers

at London, Mr James Elphinston * suggested, and took charge of an edition at Edinburgh, "for the honour of his friend, and the improvement of his country," which followed progressively the original copies, printed by Sands, Murray, and Cochran, "for the AUTHOR," on a writing paper, of the duodecimo size, sold, in single numbers, by W. Gordon and C. Wright, Parliament Close, price one penny, and completed in eight volumes, with translations of the mottos at the close of each volume †. Soon

* The translator of Martial, and author of "Principles of the English Language," and other works on education. He was the son of a clergyman of the Scottish episcopal church, many years master of an academy at Kensington, and much esteemed by Johnson for his learning, piety, and benevolence. He died in 1809.

† A second edition of the *Edinburgh Rambler*, which is a literal transcript of the first folio, was printed in 1752. Both editions, printed in handsome pocket volumes, are extremely scarce. Among the recollections of his school-boy days, when these volumes were in the hands of the present writer, the *Edinburgh Rambler* is recollected with many agreeable associations of youthful study.

after the folio edition was concluded, it was reprinted in London, in 6 vols. 12mo, and again in 4 vols. 8vo, 1752, corrected with the most anxious and scrupulous attention to the structure of every sentence, and the weight of every expression *, and accommodated with versions of the mottos, many of them from the pen of Johnson, and the remainder by Mr Elphinston, and Mr F. Lewis, of whom nothing is known †.

Johnson thought "many of Mr Elphinston's mottos very happily performed;" but "he translated not another motto after he understood that the author had sold the copy, though he continued to the last his care of the Scottish edition." See "Forty years Correspondence," &c. vol. 1. p. 35.

* By collating the second and third editions with the first folio, Mr Chalmers, the editor of the "British Essayists," has discovered above *six thousand* various readings. Many of the alterations are inconsiderable; but the labour which Johnson endured in repairing "the mischiefs of haste or negligence" is remarkable; and the process which he observed in supplying deficiencies, and removing deformities, not very obvious, is interesting to those who are nicely critical in composition. See "Preface to the *Rambler*," in "British Essayists," vol. 19.

† "He lived," said Johnson, "in London, and hung loose upon society." The *Rambler* was afterwards furnished with

This production of solitary labour, unavoidably uniform in its texture, and distinguished from other periodical papers by a grave and often solemn cast of thinking, gained slowly upon the world at large, on its first appearance; but as soon as it was collected into volumes, its circle of attraction began rapidly to enlarge, and the author lived to see a just tribute paid to its merit in the extensiveness of the sale; ten numerous editions of it having been printed in London before his death, besides those of Scotland, Ireland, and America. Of the extraordinary fertility of his mind there cannot be a stronger proof than that, besides "his other great business," he answered the stated calls of the press, twice a-week, for the whole number of essays, amounting to two hundred and eight, having received no assistance, in the progress of the paper, except four billets in No. 10. by Miss Mulso, afterwards Mrs Chapone, No.

an Index, compiled by Mr Flexman, a dissenting minister, who offended Johnson by his minute exactness in setting down the name of Milton thus—Milton, Mr *John*. See Boswell's Life, &c. Vol. iv, p. 340.

30. by Miss Catharine Talbot, Nos. 44. and 100. by Miss Carter, No. 97. by Mr Samuel Richardson, " an author who has enlarged the knowledge of human nature, and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue," and the second letters in Nos. 15. and 107. by unknown correspondents.

These admirable essays, we are told by Mr Boswell, were written in haste, just as they were wanted for the press, without even being read by him before they were printed. Making every allowance for powers far exceeding the usual lot of man, still there are bounds which we must set to our belief upon this head. It is not at every season that the mind can concentrate its faculties to a particular subject with equal strength, or that the fancy can create imagery spontaneously to adorn and enforce its reasonings. That Johnson sometimes selected his subject, culled his images, and arranged his arguments for these papers, is evident from the notes of his *Common-place Book*, preserved by Sir John Hawkins and Mr Bos-

well*. When he planned some essays with such minute carefulness, it is not likely that he trusted wholly to the sudden effusions of his mind for the remainder. Those which are taken from the notes of his *Common-place Book*, do not manifest, by an excellence superior to the rest, peculiar labours of mind in the conception, or pains in the composition; and we cannot suppose a man so happy in his genius, that the new-born offspring of his brain should invariably appear as strong and perfect as those which have been matured, fashioned, and polished by sedulous reflection. This, therefore, appears to be most probable, with respect to the wonderful faculty which he is said to have manifested in this and other of his works, that, during his sleepless nights and frequent abstractions from company, he con-

* He marked upon the first blank leaf, "To the 128th page, Collections for the *Rambler*;" and, in another place, (probably after the work was finished), he added, "In all, taken of provided materials, 30." See Boswell's Life, &c. Vol. 1, p. 172.

ceived and sketched much of an impending work; that, though he had in some degree preconceived his materials, he committed nothing to paper, just as he is known to have done in composing his *Vanity of Human Wishes*. If this supposition strips the account of wonder, it invests it with probability; since a man of his powers of mind and habits of composition might well write an essay at a sitting, and without a blot, when he had little more to attend to than to clothe his conceptions in vigorous language, modulated into sonorous periods *.

* Johnson's manner of composing has not been rightly understood. He was so extremely short-sighted, from the defect in his eyes, that writing was inconvenient to him; for whenever he wrote, he was obliged to hold the paper close to his face. He, therefore, never composed what we call a foul draft on paper of any thing he published, but used to revolve the subject in his mind, and turn and form every period, till he had brought the whole to the highest correctness and the most perfect arrangement. Then his uncommonly retentive memory enabled him to deliver a whole essay, properly finished, whenever it was called for. The writer of this note has often heard him humming and forming periods, in low whispers to himself, when shallow observers thought he was muttering prayers,

Although the solemnity and general sameness of the style and matter of *The Rambler* prevented it, as a periodical paper, from obtaining an extensive popularity, yet the excellence of the precepts of practical morality, the sagacity of the decisions of literary criticism, and the dignity of expression, were very soon appreciated by men of taste and genius, and obtained from competent judges a just proportion of praise. Richardson, in a letter to Mr Cave, dated Aug. 9. 1750, thus expresses his opinion.

"I am inexpressibly pleased with the *Ramblers*. I remember not any thing in the "Spectators" that half so much struck me; and yet I think of them highly. I hope the world tastes them; for its own sake I hope

&c. But Johnson is well known to have represented his own practice, in the following passage, in his Life of Pope. "Of composition there are different methods. Some employ at once memory and invention; and, with little intermediate use of the pen, form and polish large masses by continued meditation, and write their productions only when, in their own opinion, they have completed them." BISHOP PERCY.

the world tastes them. The author I can only guess at. There is but one man, I think, that could write them.

"I have, from the first five, spoke of them with honour. I have the vanity to think, that I have procured them admirers; that is to say, *readers* *."

Mr Cave, in a letter written Aug. 13. 1750, informs the author of "Clarissa," "that Mr Johnson is the *Great Rambler*," and acknowledges an early and zealous support of the paper by persons of rank and learning.

"When the author was to be kept private, (which was the first scheme), two gentlemen belonging to the Prince's court came to me to enquire his name, in order to do him service. As I was not at liberty, an inference was drawn that I was desirous to keep to myself so excellent a writer. Soon after Mr Dodington † sent a letter, directed

* Richardson's Correspondence &c.

† Afterwards Lord Melcombe, a statesman distinguished, through a long life, by the cultivation and patronage of literature and poetry, and dishonoured, since

to the Rambler, inviting him to his house, when he should be disposed to enlarge his acquaintance. In a subsequent number, a kind of excuse was made, with a hint, that a good writer might not appear to advantage in conversation.

"I have had letters of approbation from Dr Young, Dr Hartley, Dr Sharpe, Miss C—, &c. &c. most of them, like you, setting them in a rank equal, and some superior, to the Spectators *."

The author of the "Night Thoughts," it is said, was particularly struck "with the

his death, by the unblushing confession of political versatility, in his posthumous "Diary," 8vo. 1785. The passage in the *Rambler*, alluded to by Cave, as an apology for Johnson declining his invitation, occurs in No. 14. "A transition from an author's book, to his conversation, is too often like an entrance into a large city, after a distant prospect. Remotely, we see nothing but spires of temples, and turrets of palaces, and imagine it the residence of splendour, grandeur, and magnificence; but when we have passed the gates, we find it perplexed with narrow passages, disgraced with despicable cottages, embarrassed with obstructions, and clouded with smoke."

* Richardson's Correspondence, &c.

more solemn papers;" and, in his copy of *the Rambler*, which was inspected by Mr Boswell, "the passages which he thought particularly excellent were marked, by folding down a corner of the page; and such as he rated in a supereminent degree, were marked by double folds."

Johnson was highly gratified by the minute attention of Young; and not less by the praise of one who was peculiarly dear to him. "Johnson told me," says Mr Boswell, "with an amiable fondness, that Mrs Johnson, in whose judgment and taste he had great confidence, said to him, after a few numbers of *The Rambler* had come out, 'I thought very well of you before, but I did not imagine you could have written any thing equal to this.' Distant praise, from whatever quarter, is not so delightful as that of a wife whom a man loves and esteems. Her approbation may be said to 'come home to his bosom;' and being so near, its effect is most sensible and permanent*."

* Boswell's Life, &c. Vol. 1, p. 178.

In April 1750, soon after the commencement of the *Rambler*, he wrote a *Prologue*, which was spoken by Garrick, at Drury-lane theatre, on the representation of the masque of "Comus," for the benefit of Mrs Elizabeth Foster, Milton's grand-daughter; and took a very zealous interest in the success of the charity. His pity and indignation had been excited by a passage at the conclusion of Bishop Newton's Life of Milton, representing the poverty and infirmity of the only surviving branch of his family; and, in his *Postscript* to Lauder's "Essay," he recommended a subscription "for relieving, in the languor of age, the pains of disease, and the contempt of poverty," the grand-daughter of the author of "Paradise Lost." "It is yet," said he, "in the power of a great people to reward the poet whose name they boast, and from their alliance to whose genius they claim some kind of superiority to every other nation of the earth; that poet, whose works may possibly be read when every other monument of British greatness shall be obliterated; to reward him, not with

pictures or with medals, which, if he sees, he sees with contempt, but with tokens of gratitude, which he perhaps may even now consider as not unworthy the regard of an immortal spirit." On the day preceding the performance of "Comus," he inserted a letter in the "General Advertiser," April 4, strongly recommending the public to honour the illustrious dead by benevolence to his living remains, struggling with distress, and debilitated by age. For the honour of letters, the dignity of sacred poetry, the spirit of the English nation, and the glory of human nature, it is to be regretted that we do not find a more liberal assistance. Tonson, the bookseller, whose family had been enriched by the sale of the poet's writings, gave L.20, and Bishop Newton, his biographer, brought a large contribution; yet all their efforts, joined to the allurements of Johnson's pen and Garrick's performance, both in the masque, and, by particular desire, in the after-piece*, procured only L.130.

* Lethe, a dramatic satire.

The charitable interference of Johnson, in mitigating the poverty of Milton's last relative, when it does not appear that he was aware of the imposture of Lauder, shews his alacrity in doing good, and may be regarded as an indication of his favourable disposition towards our incomparable poet. "The man," says Mr Murphy, "who had thus exerted himself to serve the grand-daughter, cannot be supposed to have entertained personal malice to the grandfather." This candid exculpation of Johnson from the accusation of combining benevolence to the living with enmity to the dead, is considered by Dr Symmons, the learned biographer and eloquent advocate of the republican poet, as both irrelevant and defective *.

"While he was depreciating," he remarks, "the fame of the illustrious ancestor, Johnson could not act more prudently, or in a way more likely to lead him to his final object, than by acquiring easy credit, as the friend of the distressed grandchild; and the prologue which he wrote

* Essay, &c. p. 65.

for her benefit, and which is little more than a vindication of what he had before attached to the pamphlet, sullied with Lauder's malignity and forgeries, has fully answered the writer's purposes, by the imputed liberality which it has obtained for him, and the means with which it has thus supplied him, of striking, during the repose of suspicion, the more pernicious blow. Avowed hostility generally defeats its own object; and the semblance of kindness has commonly been assumed by the efficient assassin for the perpetration of his design. Whether, in short, in the instance before us, Johnson indulged, as his friends would persuade us to believe, the charitable propensities of his own heart, or availed himself of the opportunity to provide for the interests of his own character, the measure may be allowed to have been good, or to have been wise, but cannot be admitted, in opposition to the testimony of formidable facts, to have been demonstrative of his favourable disposition towards Milton *."

* Life of Milton, 8vo, 1807. p. 562.

The acuteness of this able biographer's reasoning may be allowed, without adopting the inference which he has drawn from it. Moderation is seldom to be expected to extend to politics, however inherent in the writer on other occasions. In analysing the motives of Johnson's beneficence, the zealous Whig defender of our great epic poet, has adopted the language of prejudice and aversion, which he condemned in the confederate of Lauder. To opinion there are scarcely any assignable bounds, and to prejudice none. The Tory critic certainly looked through the gross medium of prejudice on the stern republican poet; and because he did not approve of his political and religious opinions, he has been unjust to his talents and virtues. This may be conceded to his severe accuser; but the magnanimity and ingenuousness manifested in the whole tenor of his life and writings, will for ever render him impassible to the efforts of any man, in attempting to fix on his memory the adoption of the arts of imposition.

for the purpose of depreciating the worth, and blasting the laurels of Milton.

Mr Hayley, the predecessor of Dr Symmons, actuated by motives equally honourable with those of the generous and masterly advocate of Milton, has no mercy on the toryism of his poetical biographer, and is not more sparing of his censure of the injustice of his critical opinions; but he speaks of the magnanimous teacher of moral philosophy with more reverence, and candidly exculpates him from any approach to imposition, in cherishing too eagerly a deception, fabricated to sink an illustrious character.

"The philosopher, indeed, made an honourable retreat; and no candid mind, will severely censure him for an ill-starred alliance, which, however clouded by prejudice, he might originally form in compassion to indigence, and which he certainly ended by rejection of imposture *."

* Life of Milton, 4to, 1796, p. 243.

Of his benevolence to the unfortunate, unlimited by the distinctions of country, sect, or party, an instance deserves to be recorded here, though it happened some years afterwards; as it demonstrates, beyond the suspicion of any modification of selfishness, that the relief of industrious indigence was his general motive; and an opportunity of honouring the dead, by doing good to the living, a powerful incentive to his active and diffusive beneficence. One De Groot a nephew, by several descents of the celebrated Grotius, an obscure painter in London, who never rose higher in his profession than to get his immediate living, being old, poor, and infirm, in a great degree, was very desirous of an hospital. Johnson had known him many years, and requested the assistance of Dr Vyse, rector of Lambeth, in recommending him to Archbishop Cornwallis as a governor of the Charter-house. "Let it not be said," says he, "that in a lettered country a nephew of Grotius, from whom perhaps every man of learning has learnt

something, asked a charity, and was refused *." Dr Vyse's recommendation to the Archbishop succeeded, and poor De Groot was admitted into the Charter-house; in which comfortable retreat he ended his days in peace.

In 1751, while he was employed both on the *Rambler* and his *Dictionary*, he contributed the *Life of Cheynell* to "The Student, or the Oxford and Cambridge Monthly Miscellany;" a periodical work, set up by Bonnel Thornton, then a student of Christ Church, and printed at Oxford; in which Smart, Colman, Warton, and other wits of both the universities, distinguished their talents. It preceded the *Rambler* about two months; and, in the number for October 1750 †, the following very just and handsome tribute is paid to the merits of this excellent paper, while yet it had run but a small part of its course.

"There is one gentleman from whom we should be proud to borrow, if our plan forbade it

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iii, p. 134.

† It closed July 3, 1751, and was collected in two volumes.

not; and, since the text is *Gratitude,* we beg leave to return our acknowledgments to him for the noble and rational entertainment he has given us, we mean the admirable author of the *Rambler;* a work that exceeds any thing of the kind ever published in this kingdom, some of the SPECTATORS excepted, if indeed they may be excepted. We own ourselves unequal to the task of commending such a work up to its merits; where the diction is the most high-wrought imaginable, and yet, like the brilliancy of a diamond, exceeding perspicuous in its richness; where the sentiments ennoble the style, and the style familiarises the sentiments; where every thing is easy and natural, yet every thing is masterly and strong. May the public favour crown his merits; and may not the English, under the auspicious reign of GEORGE II. neglect a man, who, had he lived in the first century, would have been one of the greatest favourites of AUGUSTUS."

Sir John Hawkins relates, that, in the spring of this year, he indulged himself in a frolic of midnight revelry. This was to celebrate the

birth of Mrs Lennox's first literary child, the novel of "Harriet Stuart." He drew the members of the Ivy-Lane Club and others, to the number of twenty, to the Devil Tavern, where Mrs Lennox and her husband met them. Johnson, after an invocation of the Muses, and some other ceremonies of his own invention, invested the authoress with a laurel crown. The festivity was protracted till morning, and Johnson through the night was a Bachanalian, without the use of wine.

Though his circumstances, at this time, were far from being easy, he received, as a constant visitor at his house, Miss Anna Williams, daughter of a Welsh physician, and a woman of more than ordinary talents and literature, who had just lost her sight. She had contracted a close intimacy with his wife; and after her death she had an apartment from him, at all times when he had a house. In 1755, Garrick gave her a benefit-play, which produced L.200. In 1766 she published a quarto volume of "Miscellanies," and thereby increased her little stock to L.300. She

had also a pension of L.10 a-year settled on her by Mrs Montague, to which Bishop Percy added L.10; but she died before she received more than the first half year's payment.

Having supported, for two years, the arduous employment of a periodical writer, singly and alone, on the 14th of March 1752 he closed the labours of the *Rambler*, while as yet his lucubrations manifested no declension of vigour and spirit, nor any indication of lassitude or negligence. Though these excellent papers, as they came out, delighted the admirers of dignified diction and solid sense, yet, as the principal object of his great exertions was to inculcate wisdom and piety, the severity of dictatorial instruction was too seldom relieved by "harmless merriment," and scarcely any reader was found so steadily serious as not to be driven, by the sternness of the *Rambler's* philosophy, to more cheerful and airy companions. That this was the chief cause of his "having never been much a favourite with the public," at least among the gayer ranks, he has himself

confessed, without intending it, in the concluding paper.

"I have never complied with temporary curiosity, nor enabled my readers to discuss the topics of the day; I have rarely exemplified my assertions by living characters; in my papers no man could look for censures of his enemies, or praises of himself; and they only were expected to peruse them, whose passions left them leisure for abstracted truth, and whom virtue could please by its native dignity."

Though he disclaims the subordinate and instrumental arts by which the favour of the distributors of literary honours is obtained, yet he has allotted many papers to the excursions of fancy, the disquisitions of criticism, the delineation of character, and the exhibition of humour. He had been "running about the world *," as he expressed it, more than almost any body, "with his wits ready to ob-

* Boswell's Life &c. Vol. i, p. 185.

serve and his tongue ready to talk †;" and having an exuberant fund of character and anecdote, a rich vein of peculiar humour, and a vigorous and warm imagination, his pictures of life, taken from general observation, possess the attraction of novelty and surprise, without departing wholly from the resemblance of individual nature. In contemplating the portrait before him, amplified, as the occasion requires, by the enlargement of declamation, or the exaggeration of burlesque, the reader finds his own likeness; and his mind is never carried away from the contemplation of his own manners to follow the phantoms of imagination, which may raise mirth or abhorrence, but have no direct influence on personal reformation.

Several of the characters in the *Rambler*, however artificial the language might be, were drawn so naturally, that, when it first came out in numbers, they were actually claimed by a club that met weekly at Rum-

† Mrs Piozzi's Anecdotes &c. p. 52.

ford in Essex, who conceived themselves to be severally exhibited in it, and were much incensed against a person who they suspected had made them the objects of public notice; nor were they quieted till they obtained from the printer full satisfaction concerning the writer, who, from his own knowledge of general manners, quickened by a lively imagination, had happily delineated, unknown to himself, the members of the Bowling-green club *.

Occasionally, we are told, his characters were intended as copies of real life. "The character of *Prospero*," Mrs Piozzi observes, "Garrick took to be his, and I have heard the author say, that he never forgave the offence. *Sophron* was likewise a picture drawn from reality; and by *Gelidus*, the philosopher, he meant to represent Mr Colson, a mathematician, who formerly lived at Rochester. The man immortalized for purring like a cat, was, as he told me, one

* Mrs Piozzi's Anecdotes &c. p. 235.

Busby, a proctor in the Commons. He who barked so ingeniously, and then called the drawer to drive away the dog, was father to Dr Salter of the Charter-house. He who sung a song, and by correspondent motions of his arm chalked out a giant on the wall, was one Richardson an attorney *."

Towards the close of his valedictory paper, he looks forward with confidence to "the final sentence of mankind," for a favourable acceptance of his endeavours to improve his native language, by the formation of a more correct and dignified style.

"I have laboured to refine our language to grammatical purity, and to clear it from colloquial barbarisms, licentious idioms, and irregular combinations. Something, perhaps, I have added to the elegance of its construction, and something to the harmony of its cadence. Where common words were less pleasing to the ear, or less distinct in their signification, I have familiarised the terms of philosophy, by applying them to popular ideas;

* Anecdotes &c. p. 49.

but have rarely admitted any word not authorised by former writers; for I believe that whoever knows the English tongue, in its present extent, will be able to express his thoughts without further help from other nations."

The success of his labours will be considered, when we estimate the beauties and defects of his style. The self-congratulation, in the concluding paragraph, is so dignified, and pathetic, that it is impossible to avoid transcribing it.

"The essays professedly serious, if I have been able to execute my own intentions, will be found exactly conformable to the precepts of Christianity, without any accommodation to the licentiousness and levity of the present age. I, therefore, look back on this part of my work with pleasure, which no blame or praise of man shall diminish or augment. I shall never envy the honours which wit and learning obtain in any other cause, if I can be numbered among the writers who have given ardour to virtue, and confidence to truth."

The conclusion of the *Rambler*, without the author's giving his readers any warning of his intention, was probably accelerated by the declining health of his wife, who survived the date of his last paper only three days. She died on the 17th of March 1752, and after a cohabitation of seventeen years, left him a childless widower, abandoned to sorrow, and incapable of consolation. The dreadful shock of separation happened in the night, and he sent to Westminster for Dr Taylor, who came to him immediately. When he arrived, Johnson was all but wild with excess of sorrow, and scarcely knew him. After some minutes, Dr Taylor proposed their joining in prayer, as the only rational method of calming the violence of his grief, strengthening his confidence in the almighty and all-wise Dispenser of good and evil; and reconciling him to a a privation which he ought to have anticipated, and been prepared for, in the happiest moments of possession. The next day, his anxiety to have the solace of his company, and the benefit of his prayers, produced the following note:

"Let me have your company and instruction. Do not live away from me. My distress is great.

"Remember me in your prayers; for vain is the help of man." *

She was buried, according to his direction, in the chapel of Bromley in Kent, under the care of his friend Hawkesworth, who resided at that place.

Over her remains, a few months before his death, he laid a black marble stone, with the following inscription:

Hic conduntur reliquiæ
ELIZABETHÆ,
Antiqua Jarvisiorum gente,
Peatlingæ, apud Leicestrienses, ortæ;
Formosæ, cultæ, ingeniosæ, piæ;
Uxoris, primis nuptiis, HENRICI PORTER,
Secundis, SAMUELIS JOHNSON;
Qui multum amatam, diuque defletam,
Hoc lapide contexit.
Obiit Londini, mense Mart.
A. D. MDCCLII.

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. 1. p. 205.

In the interval between her death and burial, under the pressure of so great and recent a calamity, he composed a solemn and pathetic discourse for the pulpit, which was never preached; but, being given to Dr Taylor, who refused to deliver it, has been published since his death, and is justly regarded as a rational and consolatary composition, of uncommon excellence.

His prayers for *Tetty* *, from this time to the end of his life, however irreconcileable they may be to his profession as a Protestant, strongly express the warmth of his affection, and the fervour of his piety. With an amiable inclination to believe in the existence of an intermediate state between death and final judgment, he deviated from strict Protestantism, which regards our state at the close of life, as the measure of our final sentence, and rejects prayers for the dead, as the vain oblation of superstition. But he seems

* A familiar appellation of *Elizabeth*, used in some parts of Staffordshire.

not to have steadily believed that there was a middle state, where the soul may be purified by certain degrees of suffering, his prayers being only conditional, and accompanied with doubts of their lawfulness and propriety.

"O Lord, *so far as it may be lawful in me,* I commend to thy Fatherly goodness *the soul* of my departed wife; beseeching thee to grant her whatever is best in her *present state, and finally to receive her to eternal happiness.*"

"March 28 *, 1753, I kept this day as the anniversary of my Tetty's death, with prayers and tears in the morning. In the evening *I prayed for her conditionally, if it were lawful.*"

"April 23, 1753. I know not whether I do not too much indulge the vain longings of affection, but I hope they interest my heart; and that when I die like my Tetty, this affec-

* The apparent contradiction, in the commemoration of her death on the 28th, and the inscription on her wedding ring, which places her decease on the 17th, may be reconciled by the following memorandum in his Diary:—"Jan 1, 1753, N. S. which I shall use for the future."

tion will be acknowledged in a happy interview; and that, in the mean time, I am incited by it to piety. *I will not, however, deviate too much from the common and received methods of devotion.*" *

In cherishing the sensations of surviving affection intensely, he conceived a mutual influence to exist between himself and the spirit of his departed wife; and, misguided by the kindness of his heart, he believed the benefit of intercession might be mutual. The idea of this mysterious communion is expressed in the following memorandum in his diary.

"This is the day on which, in 1752, dear Tetty died. I have now uttered a prayer of repentance and contrition. *Perhaps Tetty knows that I prayed for her. Perhaps Tetty is now praying for me.* God help me." †

Such evidences of the tenderness and sensibility of his mind are unquestionably ill-judged; but they are truly generous, and de-

* *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 14.

† Ibid. p. 15.

monstrate that his attachment to his deceased wife was ardent and sincere, and cherished by him to the last moment of his existence, with unabating tenderness Her wedding-ring, when she became his wife, he preserved, with affectionate care, as long as he lived, inclosed in a small wooden box, within which was pasted the following inscription;

Eheu!
ELIZ. JOHNSON.
Nupta Jul. 9, 1736.
Mortua, eheu!
Mart. 17, 1752.

She is, however, reported not to have been worthy of this sincere attachment. Mrs Desmoulins, who lived for some time with her at Hampstead, told Mr Boswell, that she indulged herself in country air and nice living, at an unsuitable expence, while her husband was drudging in the smoke of London; that she was negligent of economy in her domestic affairs; and that she by no means treated him

with that complacency which is the most engaging quality in a wife.

"When I made acquaintance with him," Mrs Piozzi observes, "he always persisted in saying, that he never rightly recovered the loss of his wife. (I had heard that he loved her passionately.) It is in allusion to her that he records the observation of a female critic, as he calls her, in *Gay's Life.* She read comedy better than any body he ever heard (he said); in tragedy she mouthed too much. She had a particular reverence, (he said) for cleanliness, and desired the praise of neatness in her dress and furniture, as many ladies do, till they become troublesome. The picture I found of her at Lichfield was very pretty, and her daughter said it was like her. Her hair (he told me) was eminently beautiful, quite *blonde* like that of a baby. Garrick, however, used to say, that she was a little painted puppet of no value at all, and quite disguised with affectation, full of odd airs of rural elegance. The intelligence I gained of her from old Levett

was only perpetual illness, and perpetual opium *."

The imputation of the little artifices and particularities of antiquated beauty is perfectly compatible with his fondness for her; especially when it is remembered, that he had a high opinion of her understanding; and that the impression which her beauty, real or imaginary, had originally made upon his imagination, being continued by habit, had not been effaced, though she herself was, doubtless, much altered for the worse.

Sir John Hawkins has declared himself inclined to think, " that if this fondness of Johnson for his wife, who was more than old enough to be his mother, was not dissembled, it was a lesson that he had learned by rote; and that when he practised it, he knew not where to stop, till he became ridiculous." To argue from her being much older than Johnson or any other circumstances, that he could not really love her, is absurd; for love is not a

* Anecdotes, p. 146—148.

subject of reasoning, but of feeling; and, therefore, there are no common principles upon which one can persuade another concerning it. That Johnson married her for love is believed. During the married state, the happiness of which depends so much on the mutual attachment of both parties, he was fond and indulgent. At her death he was agonized; and ever after, though he might be tenderly disposed, from his habitual melancholy, to charge himself with slight omissions and offences, cherished her image as the companion of his most solemn hours. If seventeen years passed in acts of tenderness during their union, and a longer period spent in regret after death had divided them, cannot fix our opinion that Johnson's fondness was not the effect of dissimulation, or the unfelt lesson of a parrot, where shall we fix bounds to suspicion, or place limits to the presumption of man, in passing sentence upon the feelings of his neighbour?

The following authentic and artless account of his situation after his wife's death, was

given to Mr Boswell, by Francis Barber,* his faithful negro-servant, who came into his family about a fortnight after the dismal event.

"He was in great affliction. Miss Williams was then living in his house, which was in Gough-square. He was busy with his *Dictionary;* Mr Shiels, and some others of the gentlemen who had formerly written for him, used to come about him. He had then little for himself; but frequently sent money to

* He was born in Jamaica, and brought to England in 1750, by Colonel Bathurst, father of Johnson's friend, Dr Bathurst. Upon the death of the Colonel, who left his affairs in total ruin, he went to live with his son, who willingly parted with him to Johnson. In 1758, upon some difference with his master, he went and served an apothecary in Cheapside, but at the end of two years returned, and was taken again into his service. He placed him at a school at Bishops-Stortford, and kept him there five years, that he might have the advantage of some learning. He married a white woman, who, Mrs Piozzi says, "was eminently pretty." He was a great favourite with his master; but it has been supposed, that he was scarcely so much the object of Johnson's personal kindness, as the representative of Dr Bathurst; for whose sake he would have loved any body, or any thing.

Mr Shiels, when in distress. The friends who visited him at that time were chiefly Dr Bathurst, and Mr Diamond, an apothecary in Cork-street, Burlington-gardens, with whom he and Miss Williams generally dined every Sunday. There was a talk of his going to Ireland with him, which would probably have happened had he lived. There were also Mr Cave, Dr Hawkesworth, Mr Ryland, merchant on Tower-hill, Mrs Masters, the poetess, who lived with Mr Cave, Miss Carter, and sometimes Mrs Macaulay; also Mrs Gardiner, wife of a tallow-chandler in Snowhill, not in the learned way, but a worthy good woman; Mr Reynolds; Mr Millar, Mr Dodsley, Mr Bouquet, and Mr Payne, booksellers; Mr Strahan the printer; the Earl of Orrery, Lord Southwell,* Mr Garrick."

In the catalogue of Johnson's visitants, given by his servant, many are no doubt omitted; in

* This is believed to be a mistake. He was intimate with the Hon. Mr Southwell, brother of a lord of that title, an elderly gentleman, who had a literary taste.

BISHOP PERCY.

particular, his humble friend Robert Levett, an obscure practiser in physic amongst the lower people, with whom he had been acquainted from the year 1746. Such was his predilection for him, and fanciful estimation of his moderate abilities, that he consulted him in all that related to his health, and "made him so necessary to him, as hardly to be able to live without him." He now drew him into a closer intimacy with him, and not long after gave him an apartment in his house; of which he continued a constant inmate during the remainder of his life. He waited upon him every morning, through the whole course of his tedious breakfast, and was seen generally no more by him till midnight. He was of a strange grotesque appearance; stiff and formal in his manner, and seldom said a word while any company was present.* He married, when he was near sixty, a street

* This is misrepresented. Levett was a modest reserved man; humble and unaffected; ready to execute any commission for Johnson; and grateful for his patronage. BISHOP PERCY.

walker, who persuaded him that she was a woman of family and fortune. His character was rendered valuable by repeated proofs of honesty, tenderness, and gratitude to his benefactor, as well as by an unceasing diligence in his profession. His single failing was an occasional departure from sobriety.

In the state of emptiness and desolation, which left him nothing to exercise fortitude or flatter hope, he sought a remedy for the irreparable deprivation of domestic society in the company of his acquaintance; the circle of which was now enlarged by the general admiration that followed the circulation of his *Rambler*, collected into volumes.

In the accession to the number of his acquaintance at this time, are to be reckoned Sir Joshua Reynolds * and Mr Bennet Langton, young men of elegant manners, and of the most unexceptionable moral and reli-

* He received the honour of knighthood from his present Majesty, soon after his nomination to the office of President of the Royal Academy, instituted in 1768.

gious character, who conceived for him the most sincere veneration and esteem. His acquaintance with Sir Joshua Reynolds, the most accomplished artist which this country has produced, commenced in 1752, soon after his settlement in London, and was productive of the most affectionate and permanent friendship. Mr Langton, of Langton, in Lincolnshire, descended of an ancient and most respectable family, solicited his acquaintance soon after the conclusion of *The Rambler*; and was introduced to him by Mr Levett; who readily obtained his permission to bring him to Gough-square; as, indeed, he had no shyness, being always accessible, and even desirous to see persons properly recommended, in his morning circle of company.

"Mr Langton," as Mr Boswell relates, "was exceedingly surprised when the sage first appeared. He had not received the smallest information of his figure, dress, or manner. From perusing his writings, he fancied he should see a decent, well dressed, in short, a remarkably decorous philosopher: in-

stead of which, down from his bed-chamber, about noon, came, as newly risen, a huge, uncouth figure, with a little dark wig, which scarcely covered his head, and his clothes hanging loose about him; but his conversation was so rich, so animated, and so forcible, and his religious and political opinions so congenial with those in which Langton had been educated, that he conceived for him that veneration and attachment which he ever preserved."

Though it would be little profitable, if it were possible, to trace Johnson through the circle of his friends, at this time various and extensive, among persons of all ranks, characters, and professions; yet it may be interesting to benevolence to transcribe the following memorial, recorded by Mrs Chapone, in a letter to Miss Carter dated July 10th 1752, of a meeting with him and Miss Williams at the house of Richardson; as it places in an amiable light the tenderness of his regard for the unfortunate object of his protection, whose alacrity

of mind made her conversation agreeable, and even desirable, " in the gloom of solitude."

" We had a visit, whilst at Northend, from your friend Mr Johnson, and poor Miss Williams. I was charmed with his behaviour to her; which was like that of a fond father to his daughter. She seemed much pleased with her visit; shewed very good sense, with a great deal of modesty and humility, and so much patience and cheerfulness under her misfortune, that it doubled my concern for her. Mr Johnson was very communicative and entertaining, and did me the honour to address most of his discourse to me." *

The affliction with which the loss of his wife, the heaviest of all calamities, depressed his mind, suspended, for some time, his literary labours, and interrupted his commerce with the press, of which we find no trace this year, except the republication of

* Mrs Chapone's Works, vol. 1. p. 72.

his juvenile version of Pope's *Messiah* in the "Gentleman's Magazine." †

Towards the close of this year, his friend Hawkesworth, ‡ ambitious of pursuing the footsteps of the *Rambler*, of whom he entertained the highest admiration, having projected, in conjunction with Dr Bathurst, a periodical paper, under the title of *The Adventurer*, Johnson relieved the drudgery of his *Diction-*

† Among the Latin compositions of his son, Dr Beattie has printed a translation of the "Messiah" of Pope, "written long before the author knew that Dr Johnson had translated the same poem into Latin verse." It is a spirited and exact version, in the same number of lines with the original. See "Essays and Fragments," &c. p. 98.

‡ This early friend and literary associate of Johnson, (whose life has been left unwritten by his contemporaries) was born in London in 1719. His parents were dissenters. He was bred to the profession of the law, which he deserted for the occupation of literature. In 1743, he succeeded Johnson in the compilation of the Parliamentary debates in the "Gentleman's Magazine." In 1746, and the three following years, he was a poetical contributor to the Magazine, under the signature of *Greville*. In 1762, he succeeded Ruffhead in conducting the Review of New Publications, which he continued

ary, and the oppression of his grief, by taking an active part in the composition and success of the new paper.

The first number of *the Adventurer*, on a folio sheet, was published Nov. 7. 1752; and the paper was continued every Tuesday and Saturday, until the 9th March 1754, when it closed with No. 140, signed by Hawkesworth,

till 1772. Of his domestic circumstances, at this period, little is known; except that his pecuniary resources were very confined, and that he had some dependence on the emoluments of a boarding school for young ladies, kept by his wife at Bromley, which he superintended. In 1760 he published "Zimri, an oratorio;" in 1761, "Almoran and Hamet, an oriental tale," and "Edgar and Emmeline, a dramatic entertainment;" in 1765, an edition of "Swift's works, with his Life," and his "Letters, with notes," the year following; and in 1768, a translation of "Telemachus." In 1773 he was employed by Government in editing a collection of "Voyages to the Southern Hemisphere," for which he had a remuneration of L.6000. Against the flagrant proofs of impiety and indecency found in this ill-fated publication, the author of the *Adventurer*, the dignified advocate of morality and religion was unable to defend himself; and he died, exhausted by vexation and disappointment, Nov. 16. 1773.

to whom the conduct of the paper and the contribution of seventy numbers are to be ascribed. The price of each number was the same as of the *Rambler*, and it was printed for J. Payne in Paternoster Row. The sale of the separate papers was more extensive than that of the *Rambler*, during their first circulation, and when collected into volumes, four copious editions passed the press in little more than eight years.

The associates of Hawkesworth in the composition of *the Adventurer*, whose papers are acknowledged, were Dr Bathurst, Johnson, Dr Warton, Mrs Chapone, and Mr Colman. Dr Bathurst was the first coadjutor whom he called to his assistance. The papers contributed by him are in number eight. They have for their signature the letter A, and are chiefly of the ironical and satirical kind. When Dr Bathurst left England,* this re-

* In consequence of not succeeding in his profession at home, he gladly accepted the appointment of physician to the army, in the expedition against the Havannah,

source failed, and he obtained the powerful aid of Johnson, and, through his influence, of Dr Warton.

"Being desired, (March 8, 1753) by the author and proprietor of the *Adventurer*, to look out for another hand, my thoughts necessarily fixed upon you, whose fund of literature will enable you to assist them, with very little interruption of your studies.

"They desire you to engage to furnish one paper a month, at two guineas a paper; which you may very readily perform. We have considered that a paper should consist of pieces of imagination, pictures of life, and disquisitions of literature. The part which depends on the imagination is very well supplied. The province of criticism and literature, they are very desirous to assign to the commentator on Virgil. *Two* of the writers are my particular friends, and I hope the pleasure of seeing a

and fell a sacrifice to the destructive climate. "The Havannah is taken!" exclaimed Johnson, "a conquest too dearly obtained, for Bathurst died before it."

"Vix Priamus tanti totaque Troja fuit."

third united to them, will not be denied to, &c." *

The proposal was accepted; and Dr Watson enriched the *Adventurer* with twenty-four admirable essays, of which eighteen are devoted to the province of criticism. "Mrs Chapone contributed three numbers, containing the story of "Fidelia," collected in her "Miscellanies." † A single paper (No. 90.) was contributed by Mr Colman, who soon withdrew his assistance, and set up a new paper, in conjunction with Bonnel Thornton, under the title of "The Connoisseur." Johnson supported the paper more like a principal than an auxiliary. ‡ He contributed Nos. 34, 39, 41, 45, 50, 53, 58, 62, 67, 69, 74, 81, 84, 85, 92, 95, 99, 102, 107,

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. 1. p. 217.

† She died, Dec. 25, 1801, aged 74. Her works were collected in 4 vols. 8vo, 1807.

‡ Hawkesworth, who was not so well acquainted with the Latin and Greek classics as Johnson, usually sent him each paper, to prefix a motto before it was printed.

BISHOP PERCY.

108, 111, 115, 119, 120, 126, 128, 131, 137, 138, in all *twenty-nine*, marking his papers with the signature T. His first paper is dated March 3, 1753, and his last contribution, March 2, 1754. Of all these papers he gave both the fame and the profit to Dr Bathurst. Indeed, the latter wrote them while Johnson dictated; and, prompted by a generous desire to serve his friend, without injuring his reputation, he considered it a point of honour not to own them. They have the general texture and colour of his style, the same energy of thought, and richness of language, and the same dignified and solemn cast of speculation. †

† It was Hawkesworth's opinion, according to Dr Burney, that Johnson lowered and disguised his style in writing the *Adventurer*, in order that his papers might pass for those of Dr Bathurst; but the marks of Johnson's style are too decisive to be mistaken by the readers of the *Adventurer*. Hawkesworth was his closest imitator, though he affected not to be sensible of it. His imitations are sometimes so happy, that it is extremely difficult to distinguish them with certainty from the compositions of his great archetype. As his *Adventurers* were

The plan of the *Adventurer* is similar to that of the *Rambler*, of which it may be considered as an imitation; but the subjects of the papers in the *Adventurer* are more varied than the topics of the ethical discourses in the *Rambler;* and the essays are more strongly marked by the fine union of fancy, morality, criticism, and sportive satire.

On the part of Hawkesworth, the *Adventurer* was ably conducted. He appears to have been eminently qualified for a work of this kind, by the purity of his morals, an intimate knowledge of the world, an extensive, though not accurate acquaintance with literature, an ardent imagination, a rich fund of moral science, and a polished style, formed on that of Johnson, and possessing much of the

perfected at leisure, Johnson seems to have dismissed them, without anxiously labouring afterwards, as in the *Ramblers*, "to make the best of them better," by the "three ways" suggested to Mr Boswell, "*putting out, adding*, or *correcting*." Mr Boswell's account of the *Adventurer* is, in many respects, erroneous.

vigour and harmony of his model, with more ease and sweetness.

"He had excellent natural parts," Sir John Hawkins affirms; "and, by reading the modern English and French authors, had acquired a style, which, by his acquaintance with Johnson, he had improved into a very good one. He had a good share of wit, and a vein of humour. He wrote verses, that is to say, in English, with ease and fluency, and was better acquainted with the world than most men who have been bred to no profession."

After he had finished the *Adventurer*, the moral tendency of his beautiful and interesting compositions procured for him the degree of LL. D. from Dr Herring, Archbishop of Canterbury, who has the privilege, formerly exercised in England by the Pope's legates, of conferring such degrees as are obtained at the two universities. At that time he had an intention to study the civil and canon laws, and to practise as an advocate in Doc-

tor's Commons; which he afterwards laid aside; being, indeed, inadmissible.

Unfortunately, his acceptance of this dignity, intended as the reward of his exertions in support of morality and religion, was followed by the loss of Johnson's friendship; which appears to have arisen from the assumption of an immoderate self-consequence, unbecoming a wise and good man, and the unkind neglect of those who principally contributed to advance his literary reputation.

"His success," says Sir John Hawkins, "wrought no good effects upon his mind and conduct: it elated him too much; and betrayed him into a forgetfulness of his origin, and a neglect of his early acquaintance; and on this I have heard Johnson remark, in terms that sufficiently expressed a knowledge of his character, and resentment of his behaviour. It is probable that he might use the same language to Hawkesworth himself. This much is certain, that soon after the attainment of an academical honour to which

he could have no pretensions, the intimacy between them ceased." *

The weakness displayed by Hawkesworth in his elevation is certainly deplorable. His sensibility was keen and easily wounded; and it might be, that, on this occasion, Johnson roused his resentment, by reproaching him for his acceptance of a Lambeth degree, conceiving it to be irregular, and holding it in contempt; a conduct, on the part of Johnson, which cannot be justified.

Whatever may have been the cause of the misunderstanding between Johnson and his early friend, many years after, when he became the biographer of Swift, he speaks of Hawkesworth with liberal praise.

"An account of Dr Swift has been already collected with great diligence and acuteness by Dr Hawkesworth, according to a scheme which I laid before him in the intimacy of our friendship. I cannot therefore be expected to say much of a life, concerning which I had

* Hawkins's Life, &c. p. 312.

long since communicated my thoughts to a man capable of dignifying his narration with so much elegance of language and force of sentiment." *

This year, April 3d, he began the compilation of the second volume of his *Dictionary*, "room being left in the first for *Preface*, *Grammar*, and *History*, none of them yet begun;" †. and, as the best preventive of gloomy despondency, he is to be considered as employing the intervals of exertion in desultory study and social relaxation.

In the preceding year, he wrote for Mrs Lennox's "Female Quixote," a *Dedication to the Earl of Middlesex*, in a refined strain of compliment. He now wrote for the same lady, a *Dedication to the Earl of Orrery* of her "Shakespeare illustrated," &c. in which the British Pliny is courted, in classical and energetic language, to compare the plays of Shakespeare with the novels and histories on which they are founded, as "a judge whom

* *Life of Swift.*

† *Prayers and Meditations.*

Pliny himself would have wished for his assessor to hear a literary cause."

The death of Mr Cave, on the 10th of January 1754, when he had "just concluded his twenty-third annual collection," gave Johnson an opportunity of shewing his regard for his earliest patron, by writing an agreeable and instructive account of his *Life*; which was published in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for February.* "One of the last acts of reason which he exerted," says he, with affecting tenderness, "was fondly to press the hand that is now writing this little narrative." This seems to have been the only new performance of that year, except his papers in the *Adventurer*, which closed March 9th, eight days after the date of his last paper.

* It has been reprinted from a copy revised by the author in 1781, at the request of Mr Nichols, in Murphy's edition of "Johnson's Works," 1810. A monument to the memory of this industrious and intelligent printer, has been erected at Rugby in Warwickshire, the place of his education, with an inscription from the pen of Dr Hawkesworth. See Nichols' "Anecdotes of Bowyer," p. 88.

His first acquaintance with Mr Murphy commenced, about this time, in the following ing manner. During the publication of his "Gray's Inn Journal," Mr Murphy happened to be in the country with Mr Foote, and having mentioned that he was obliged to go to London, to get ready for the press one of the numbers; Foote said to him, "You need not go on that account, here is a French Magazine, in which you will find a very pretty oriental tale, translate that and send it to your printer." Mr Murphy having read it, was highly pleased with it, and followed Foote's advice. When he returned to town, this tale was pointed out to him in the *Rambler*, from whence it had been translated into the French Magazine. Mr Murphy then waited upon Johnson to explain this curious incident; and a friendship was formed, that continued, without interruption, till the death of Johnson.

In the end of July, he found an interval of leisure to make an excursion to Oxford, for the purpose of consulting the libraries there.

This was the first time of his being there after quitting the university. The next morning after his arrival, he visited, in company with Mr Warton, his old college, *Pembroke*, and received the greatest civilities from the resident fellows, of his standing, who pressed him much to have a room in the college.

"As we were leaving the college," he said to Mr Warton, 'Here I translated Pope's *Messiah*. Which do you think the best line in it? My own favourite is,

'Vallis aromaticas fundit Saronica nubes.' *

I told him, I thought it a very sonorous hexameter. I did not tell him, it was not in the Virgilian style. He much regretted that his *first* tutor was dead, for whom he seemed to entertain the greatest regard." † He staid

* The line is incorrectly repeated by Mr Warton, from memory. It stands thus in the printed copies:

"Mittit aromaticas vallis Saronica nubes."

† Boswell's Life, vol. 1. p. 235.

about five weeks, highly gratified with academical hospitality; but he collected nothing in the libraries for his *Dictionary*.

In the course of this visit to Oxford, Mr Langton, then a student at Trinity College, improved his acquaintance with Johnson, by his assiduous attention; and introduced to him his fellow student, Mr Topham Beauclerk, eldest son of Lord Sidney Beauclerk; with whom, though their opinions and modes of life were different, he had formed an intimate friendship. Johnson at first thought it strange that he should associate with one who had the character of being gay, satirical, and frolicksome; but, by degrees, he himself was delighted with his ardent love of literature, the brilliancy of his wit, the acuteness of his understanding, and the elegance of his manners; and, in a short time, they were companions. After they had made the tour of Europe, and were resident in London, innumerable were the scenes in which he was amused by the entertaining conversation and playful fancy of these young men.

Mr Boswell has given the following account of an adventure of Johnson with his gay companions, some years afterwards, which displays the author of the *Rambler* in a new light, and shows that his conduct was not always so solemn as his essays.

"One night when Beauclerk and Langton had supped at a tavern in London, and sat till about three in the morning, it came into their heads to go and knock up Johnson, and see if they could prevail on him to join them in a ramble. They rapped violently at the door of his chambers in the Temple, till at last he appeared in his shirt, with his little black wig on the top of his head, instead of a night-cap, and a poker in his hand; imagining, probably, that some ruffians were come to attack him. When he discovered who they were, and was told their errand, he smiled, and with great good humour agreed to their proposal. "What! is it you, ye dogs? I'll have a frisk with you." He was soon dressed; and they sallied forth together into Covent-Garden,

where the green grocers and fruiterers were beginning to arrange their hampers just come in from the country. Johnson made some attempts to help them; but the honest gardeners stared so at his figure and manner, and odd interference, that he soon saw his services were not relished. They then repaired to one of the neighbouring taverns, and made a bowl of that liquor called *Bishop*, which Johnson had always liked; while in joyous concontempt of sleep, from which he had been roused, he repeated the festive lines:

> Short, O short then be thy reign,
> And give us to the world again!

"They did not stay long, but walked down to the Thames, took a boat, and rowed to Billingsgate. Beauclerk and Johnson were so well pleased with their amusement, that they resolved to persevere in dissipation for the rest of the day; but Langton deserted them, being engaged to breakfast with some young ladies."

Although it might seem utterly improbable that the school-dogmatist should be a fortunate candidate for female favour; yet so delicate was his praise, so disinterested were his attachments, and so exquisite was the intellectual pleasure which his conversation communicated to susceptible minds, that his dictatorial manner was forgotten by women of distinguished beauty and elegance, in the unbounded admiration of the excellencies of his mind, and the virtues of his heart.

Some years after the currents of life had driven him to a great distance from Miss Molly Aston, the object of his earliest and most enthusiastic admiration, he spent much of his time, on a visit to Dr Taylor at Ashbourne, in the company of Miss Meynell, * afterwards Mrs Fitzherbert, " a woman (he used to say to his friend and physician Dr

* Eldest daughter of Mr Meynell, of Bradley, Derbyshire, married to Mr Fitzherbert of Tissington, many years member of Parliament for that county, and much regarded by Johnson for his polite accomplishments, and amiable benevolence.

Lawrence), of the best understanding he ever met with in any human being."

"Of Mrs Fitzherbert," says Mrs Piozzi, "he always spoke with esteem and tenderness, and with a veneration very difficult to deserve. That woman (said he) loved her husband as we would desire to be loved by our guardian angel. She stood at the door of her paradise in Derbyshire, like the angel with the flaming sword, to keep the devil at a distance. She would have been handsome for a queen; her beauty had more in it of majesty than of attraction, more of the dignity of virtue than the vivacity of wit." *

The friend of this lady, Miss Hill Boothby, † a woman of the highest intellectual en-

* Anecdotes, &c. p. 160.

† Only daughter of Brooke Boothby, a younger brother of the ancient and respectable Baronet family of that name, of Ashbourne-Hall, Derbyshire. With Mrs Meynell, the mother of Mrs Fitzherbert, she lived in the strictest friendship, which, after her death, was transferred, with benevolent ardour, to Mrs Fitzherbert, and her children. Of her intimacy and correspondenee

dowments and the purest piety, succeeded her in the management of Mrs Fitzherbert's family, and in the esteem of her panegyrist, which was improved by the reciprocities of mutual confidence into the most intimate friendship, and maintained by a delicate and unaffected epistolary intercourse, reflecting equal credit on the disinterested attachment and tender sensibility of Johnson, and the good sense and amiable piety of his elegant correspondent.

"He told me," says Mrs Piozzi, "she pushed her piety to bigotry, her devotion to enthusiasm; that she somewhat disqualified

with Johnson, the memorials have been preserved in his Works. A Hebrew Grammar, composed for her own use, and written in a beautiful character, has been preserved in the family as a distinguished testimony of her literary attainments. Her nephew, the present Sir Brooke Boothby, Bart. is well known, in the political and literary world, by his "Observations on Mr Burke's Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, &c.;" "Sorrows sacred to the memory of Penelope;" "Fables, &c.;" and, in private life, universally esteemed "the most agreeable gentleman that ever brought gladness into sensible society." The ancient peerage of Brooke is claimed by this family.

herself for the duties of this life by her perpetual aspirations after the next. * Such was, however, the purity of her mind, he said, and such the easiness of her manner, that Lord Lyttelton and he used to strive for her preference, with an emulation that occasioned hourly disgust and ended in lasting animosity. You may see (said he to me, when the Poets Lives were printed) that dear Boothby is at my heart still. She would delight in that fellow Lyttelton's company though all that I could do; and I cannot forgive even his memory the preference given by a mind like hers." †

The kindness which detained him so long among his old companions at Oxford was followed, on his return to Gough-square, in

* She has herself corrected this misrepresentation. "I am so far from excluding social duties from this life, that I am sure they are a part of it, and can only be duly and truly exerted in it. Common life, I call not social life, but, in general, all that dissipation and wandering which lead from the duties of it." *Annals, &c.* p. 94.

† Anecdotes, &c. p. 161.

the end of August, by an agreeable interchange of visits and cordial amities with Miss Boothby, who had come to London for the purpose of placing the eldest son of Mr Fitzherbert at some reputable seminary of education, preparatory to his being fixed at a public school. Of course, Johnson, who loved and admired his mother, and venerated her representative, was consulted in an affair of such consequence. "The effect of education," he observed, "is very precarious. But what can be hoped without it? Though the harvest may be blasted, we must yet cultivate." Anxious chiefly about the care of his morals, he recommended his friend Mr Elphinston as a proper instructor for the boy;" a man," he said, "well-instructed in virtue;" and added the high inducement of a visit from himself now and then to confirm his instruction. "I am strongly biassed," Miss Boothby replies, "towards the man you speak so well of; but upon the whole, Mr Elphinston is not the person Mr Fitzherbert would chuse. Though he

is no warm party man,* yet I believe the *Scotchman* and the *Non-juror* would be insuperable objections." And here his commission ended.

During the autumn, while the *Dictionary* afforded him full occupation, his mind, ever apprehensive of suffering the most deplorable of all human privations, the loss of reason, was much disturbed by the intelligence he received of the dreadful malady of Collins, the poet. Dr Warton informed him that he was then at Oxford on a visit to his brother; but labouring under the most deplorable languor of body and dejection of mind. "Poor dear Collins!" he said to Mr Warton; "Would a letter give him any pleasure? I have a

* Mr Fitzherbert was closely connected in politics with the Duke of Devonshire, and a zealous adherent of the whig party. It is not generally known that Mr Burke was indebted to Mr Fitzherbert for his introduction to the Marquis of Rockingham. Mrs Fitzherbert died in child-bed of her youngest son, the present Lord St Helens, whose title of nobility, in commemoration of his mother, is his birth-place at Derby.

mind to write. I have a notion, that by very great temperance, or more properly abstinence, he may yet recover." *

His friend Mr Dodsley, having at this time suffered the loss of a wife, "on whom his heart was fixed, and to whom every wish and desire turned," the similarity of the calamity of the disconsolate and childless widower to that which he had so lately experienced, while it claimed for him the sympathy which he needed, aggravated the sense of his own desolate situation, and embittered his reflections.

"I hope," he says to Mr Warton, "he will not suffer so much as I yet suffer for the loss of mine. I have ever since seemed to myself broken off from mankind, a kind of solitary wanderer in the wild of life, without any direction, or fixed point of view; a gloomy gazer on a world to which I have little relation." †

As the *Dictionary* drew towards a conclusion, Chesterfield, who had treated Johnson

* Boswell's Life &c. Vol. i, p. 241.

† Ibid, p. 240.

with unpardonable neglect, during its progress, now as meanly courted a reconciliation with him; probably in the expectation of obtaining the honour of a dedication, as patron of the original *Plan* of the undertaking. Towards the close of the year, he announced the approaching publication of the work in two papers in "The World," (No. 100, Nov. 28. and No. 101. Dec. 5.), written with peculiar propriety of taste, and in a high strain of elegant compliment, and delicate humour. According to Sir John Hawkins, he sent Sir Thomas Robinson to him, for the same purpose which this civility was meant to answer. But Johnson, who had not renounced the connection, but upon the just grounds of continued neglect, (which was the real cause of the breach between them, and not the commonly received story told by Sir John Hawkins, of Johnson's being denied admittance while Cibber was with his Lordship), was sensible, that to listen to an accommodation, would be to exchange dignity for a friendship, trifling in its value, and precarious in its tenure. He,

therefore, rejected his advances, and spurned his proffered patronage, by the following letter, dated 7th February, 1755, which is preserved here as a model of courtly sarcasm, and manly reprehension, couched in terms equally respectful in their form, and cutting in their essence. It affords the noblest lesson to both authors and patrons that stands upon record in the annals of literary history.

"I have been lately informed by the proprietor of 'The World,' that two papers in which my *Dictionary* is recommended to the public, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

"When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre,* that I might obtain that regard for which I

saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the arts of pleasing, which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

"Seven years, my Lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

"The Shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

"Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life

in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind: but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity, not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

"Having carried on my work thus far, with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, your, &c."

That the pride of Chesterfield was deeply wounded by this polite, yet disdainful repulse of his supposed advance, it is impossible to doubt. He, however, with his accustomed

policy, affected to be quite unconcerned, and certainly was not, in any respect, ashamed of his conduct. The letter, which conveyed a lesson of reproof to him, lay upon his table, where any body might see it. He read it to Dodsley with an air of indifference; said "this man has great powers;" pointed out the severest passages, and observed "how well they were expressed." He excused his neglect of Johnson by saying, "that he had changed his lodgings;" and declared, "that he would have turned off the best servant he ever had, if he had known that he denied him to a man who would have been always more than welcome." Of Chesterfield's invariable politeness, general affability, and easiness of access, especially to literary men, the evidence is unquestionable; but as no two characters could be more opposed, little union or friendship could be looked for between them.

Warburton applauded Johnson for rejecting the condescensions of Chesterfield with a proper spirit. Dr Adams expostulated with him for shewing his *defensive* pride on an occasion

that did not call for it. Johnson might have some reason to be offended at the time chosen by Chesterfield for praising him; but as the civility, from whatever motive it proceeded, was honourable to the lexicographer, it might, perhaps, have been more dignified to have passed the offence over in silence. He professes to have brought his work to the verge of publication, "without one act of assistance;" but he confessed to Mr Langton, "that he did once receive from Lord Chesterfield the sum of ten pounds; but as that was so inconsiderable a sum, he thought that the mention of it could not properly find a place in a letter of the kind that this was." * It were to be wished that the confession, so humiliating to the proud assertor of literary independence, had never transpired. Certain it is, however, that Johnson remained under an obligation to Chesterfield, to the value of *ten pounds.*

After this open rupture, Johnson no longer observed any deference towards his discarded

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. i, p. 226.

patron, but publicly expressed his opinion of him with pointed severity. "This man," he used to say, "I thought, had been a lord among wits, but I find he is only a wit among lords." When the "Letters to his Son" appeared, many years afterwards, * he observed, with more justice, "they teach the morals of a whore, and the manners of a dancing master." In disclaiming the fallacious patronage of Chesterfield, he has depreciated his polished manners, brilliant wit, and elegant accomplishments, which rendered him "the grace of courts," the ornament of polite literature, and the constant delight of his friends. In the highest public stations, his conduct ever met with applause; and in the tender domestic relations, he was not only irreproachable, but exemplary. That his "Periodical Essays," on subjects connected with manners and

* Lord Chesterfield died in 1773. The "Letters," &c. were published, without his direction, the year following, by his son's relict, from the originals in her possession. His "Miscellaneous Works" were published by Dr Maty, in 1777.

taste, possess much literary merit, and, in their tendency, are unexceptionably pure, cannot be denied. His "Letters," which display an exemplary solicitude concerning the education of his son, and contain many excellent lessons for the conduct of youth, with singular inconsistency, recommend a disproportionate attention to external elegance of manners, and, in some passages, inculcate the practice of duplicity and vice. From the serious charge of our great moralist against the principles of this work, the noble author cannot be vindicated. How much it is to be regretted, that in a system of education, which contains so many good precepts of conduct, and so much valuable information on human life and manners, passages should be found, which fix upon a literary character, professedly moral, a deep and indelible stain!

Little did the irritation, which the chastisement of Chesterfield implies, retard the progress of the great work, of which he was supposed to be anxious to retain the glory of the patronage, by "scribbling," as Johnson said

to Mr Boswell, "in 'The World,' about it." The conclusion of the *Dictionary* was an object from which his attention could not be diverted; and the approach of the day that was to reward his labour with applause, served to invigorate his activity, and stimulate his diligence. "I now begin to see land," he says to Mr Warton, "after having wandered, according to Mr Warburton's phrase, in this vast sea of words." *

When the *Dictionary* was expected to appear in the course of a few months, the degree of Master of Arts, which, it has been observed, could not be obtained for him from the University of Oxford at an early period, was now considered as an honour of considerable importance, in order to grace the title-page of the work, and recommend it to the notice of foreigners. Accordingly, in November 1754, he was induced, by the advice and assistance of his friends, Mr Warton and Mr Wise, Radclivian librarian, to solicit

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. i. p. 242.

from the University this well-earned academical distinction. On the 20th of February 1755, the degree of Master of Arts, by diploma, on the recommendation of the Earl of Arran, the Chancellor, was conferred upon him by the University, without a single dissentient voice, and in terms expressive of a high sense of the utility of his periodical essays, and in anticipation of the excellence of his *Dictionary*.

"Cumque vir doctissimus SAMUEL JOHNSON, e Collegio Pembrochiensi, scriptis suis popularium mores informantibus dudum literato orbi innotuerit; quin et linguæ patriæ tum ornandæ tum stabiliendæ, (Lexicon scilicet Anglicanum, summo studio, summo a se judicio congestum, propediem editurus) etiam nunc utilissimam impendat operam; Nos, &c. &c.

The honourable testimony of the heads of colleges and scholars, in convocation, to his abilities and merit, had been anticipated by the Chancellor, in his letter to the University, dated February 4. 1755, recommending the

great English moralist and lexicographer, to the Master's degree, which he solicited.

"Mr Samuel Johnson, who was formerly of Pembroke College, having very eminently distinguished himself by the publication of a series of essays, excellently calculated to form the manners of the people, and in which the cause of religion and morality is every where maintained by the strongest powers of argument and language; and who shortly intends to publish a Dictionary of the English Tongue, formed on a new plan, and executed with the greatest labour and judgment; I persuade myself that I shall act agreeably to the sentiments of the whole University, in desiring that it may be proposed, in convocation, to confer on him the degree of Master of Arts, by diploma; to which I readily give my consent," &c.

On receiving his diploma from the University, through the hands of his friend Dr King, of St Mary Hall, *(vir eximius)* he testified his gratitude for the honour done him in a Latin letter to Dr Huddesford, the Vice-

Chancellor, written with classical elegance and purity. *

At length, the *English Dictionary*, that stupendous monument of individual industry, was completed; and in May 1755, this great work was published, in 2 vols. folio; to which were prefixed, a *Preface*, *The History of the English Language*, and *A Grammar of the English Tongue*.

When he began the undertaking, of which the *Plan* was given to the public in 1747, he supposed that, by constant application, he might complete it in three years; but his imagination deceived him so far, in estimating his vast powers, that eight years elapsed before the *English Dictionary* was ushered into the world. When, however, the *Plan* is attentively compared with the execution, it will be evident, that, making allowance for intervening calamities, and various literary avocations, the time he employed upon it was disproportionately short.

* See Boswell's Life, vol. i. p. 247.

One consequence of the work being protracted was, that he obtained only a temporary benefit from it; for, at the time of publication, he had received all the copy-money, by different drafts, and was paid L.100 and upwards, more than the stipulated sum. The patience of his employers was severely tried; and it will not be thought strange, that when the last sheet was brought to Mr Millar, he should exclaim, "Thank God, I am done with him!"—an exclamation, which, when repeated to Johnson, he observed, with a smile, "I am glad that he thanks God for any thing."

The *Dictionary* was received by the learned world, who had long wished for its appearance, with an applause proportionable to the impatience which the promise of it had excited; and its author was ranked among the greatest benefactors of his native tongue. Though we may believe him in the declaration, at the end of his *Preface*, that he "dismissed it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise;" yet we cannot but suppose that he was pleased

with the honour it procured him, both abroad and at home. His friend, the Earl of Corke and Orrery being at Florence, presented it to the *Academia Della Crusca.* That academy sent Johnson their *Vocabolario,* and the French Academy sent him their *Dictionnaire,* by Mr Langton, in return for the present of his. The circulation at home was rapid and extensive; and though it underwent some criticism, on account of errors and deficiencies, it was in general judged to be superior to any vernacular *Dictionary* which the nation had yet seen, and as free from imperfections as could be expected in a work of such extent, executed by one man. His old pupil, Garrick, complimented him on the triumph of his labours, in the following "Epigram," in allusion to the disparity between his gigantic exertions, in constructing a classical English *Dictionary,* and the labours of the *forty* French Academicians, employed, ineffectually, in settling their language.

"Talk of war with a Briton, he'll boldly advance,
That one English soldier will beat ten of France;
Would we alter the boast from the sword to the pen,
Our odds are still greater, still greater our men.
In the the deep mines of science though Frenchmen may toil,
Can their strength be compared to Locke, Newton, and Boyle?
Let them rally their heroes, send forth all their powers,
Their verse-men and prose-men; then match them with ours:
First Shakespeare and Milton, like gods in the fight,
Have put their whole drama and epic to flight:
In satires, epistles, and odes would they cope,
Their numbers retreat before Dryden and Pope;
And JOHNSON well arm'd, like a hero of yore,
Has beat *forty* French, and will beat forty more."

In the construction of a *Dictionary*, of standard authority, that was to entitle him to the gratitude of a long succession of writers in his native language, he had few predecessors in this branch of literature, from whom he could receive assistance. Blount's "Glossographia," Phillips's "New World of Words," and Bailey's "Etymological English Dictionary," were the only vernacular vocabularies, of any consequence, which preceded the Lexicon of

Johnson. To the useful compilation of Bailey, which had passed through many improved editions, he was enabled to apply for his etymologies. To the "Latin and English Dictionaries" of Littleton and Ainsworth, he may be supposed to have referred for English words, and, occasionally, for their signification. In etymological and technical lexicography, Cowell's "Law Dictionary," Minshew's "Guide," Somner's "Saxon Dictionary," Spelman's "Glossarium," Junius's "Etymologicon Anglicanum," and Skinner's "Etymologicon Linguæ Anglicanæ," were necessarily his principal authorities. For the definitions, and authorities for the various senses of the words, unattempted by his predecessors, he was indebted to the resources of his own great intellectual powers, and accumulated stores of erudition; and these, though not unexceptionable, are undoubtedly a vast accession to English literature, and constitute the chief excellence of this noble addition to our language. In the *Grammar of the Eng-*

lish Tongue he has chiefly followed Wallis, whose imperfect knowledge of the Teutonic dialects, and of the philosophy of grammar and language, was the misfortune of his time, rather than the fault of the individual. The *Preface* is a splendid specimen of eloquent composition, equally correct in the diction and in the principle. It contains an elaborate and comprehensive view of his subject, a correct estimate of the duties of a perfect lexicographer, and a fair apology for the imperfections of his work. The conclusion is so irresistibly pathetic, that it is impossible to read the passage without shedding a tear.

"In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted, let it not be forgotten that much also is performed; and though no book was ever spared out of tenderness to the author, (and the world is little solicitous to know whence proceed the faults of that which it condemns), yet it may gratify curiosity to inform it, that the *English Dictionary* was written with

little assistance of the learned,* and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academic bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow. It may repress the triumph of malignant criticism, to observe, that if our language is not here fully displayed, I have only failed in an attempt which no human powers have hitherto completed. If the lexicons of ancient tongues, now immutably fixed, and comprised in a few volumes, be yet, after the toil of successive ages, inadequate and delusive; if the aggregated knowledge, and co-operating diligence of the Italian academicians, did not secure them from the censure of Beni; if the embodied critics of France, when fifty years had been spent upon their work, were obliged to change its economy, and give their second

* The only aid which he received, was a paper containing twenty etymologies, sent him by Dr Pearce, bishop of Rochester.

edition another form; I may surely be contented without the praise of perfection; which if I could obtain in this gloom of solitude,* what would it avail me? I have protracted my work, till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave; and success and miscarriage are empty sounds: I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise."

As though he had foreseen some of the circumstances which would attend this publication, he observes, "A few wild blunders, and risible absurdities, from which no work of such multiplicity was ever free, may, for a time, furnish folly with laughter, and harden ignorance into contempt; but useful diligence will at last prevail; and there can never be wanting some who distinguish desert."

* We find the same tender recollection of the loss of his wife recurring to his mind upon innumerable occasions.

Among those who amused themselves and the public on this occasion, Mr Wilkes, in an essay printed in the "Public Advertiser," ridiculed the following position in the *Grammar*. "H seldom, perhaps never, begins any but the first syllable;" and in opposition to it, remarked, for example, "The author of this observation must be a man of a quick *appre-hension*, and of a most *compre-hensive* genius." The position is undoubtedly expressed with too much latitude, but Johnson did not alter it till many years afterwards. *

Dr Kenrick's threatened "Ramble through the Idler's Dictionary, in which are picked up several thousand etymological, orthographical, and lexicographical blunders,"† never

* In the third edition, printed in 1773, he left out the words *perhaps never*, and added, "it sometimes begins middle or final syllables in words compounded, as *block-head*, or derived from the Latin, as *cómpre-hended*."

† Announced at the end of his "Review of Johnson's edition of Shakespeare." An indirect attack, several years after, in his "Epistle to Mr Boswell, occasioned by his having transmitted the moral writings of Johnson

saw the light. The ridicule of the style of the *Rambler*, and the obscurity of some definitions in the *Dictionary*, under the title of "Lexiphanes," a dialogue, in imitation of Lucian, though laughable, from the application of "words of large meaning" to insignificant matters, and the translation of "easier words into harder," was too feeble to make any durable impression.* Another effort of spleen,

to General Paoli," recoiled on the writer himself, one of the severest of critics. The omissions of Johnson stimulated his emulation, in compiling "A New Dictionary of the English Tongue," 4to, 1773, principally directed towards the correction of pronunciation, accent, and quantity.

* This effusion of sportive malignity, was the production of Mr A. Campbell, son of Professor Archibald Campbell of St Andrew's, a purser in the navy, and author of "The Sale of Authors," and other tracts. Coarse invective, not humour, was the talent of the writer of "Lexiphanes." He has too much acrimony in his raillery. "A Letter from LEXIPHANES, containing proposals for a Glossary of the Vulgar Tongue, intended as a Supplement to a larger *Dictionary*," a light sally of Mr Colman, at the expence of Johnson, is printed in his "Prose on several occasions."

entitled "The Deformities of Johnson;"* an accumulation of the frivolous censures of a concealed adversary, was too trifling to disturb his tranquillity. The world applauded; and Johnson never replied; from a settled resolution he had formed, of declining all controversy in defence of his writings.

At the time of the appearance of the *English Dictionary*, the study of the Gothic tongue, and its kindred dialects, had been little cultivated in England, and nothing of much value had been published on the philosophy of grammar and language, except the "Hermes" of Harris, the "Grammar" of Lowth, and the "Origin and Progress of

* An invidious contrast to "The Beauties of Johnson," the production of Mr Thomson Callender, nephew of Thomson the poet, and author of "Miscellanies in Prose and Verse," erroneously attributed to Lord Gardenstone; "Observations on Johnson's Lives of the Poets;" the "Political Progress of Britain," &c. To avoid a prosecution for sedition against the author of the latter pamphlet, he left Scotland, and crossed the Atlantic for America, where he was appointed reporter to Congress, and died a few years ago.

Language" of Monboddo, before the "Diversions of Purley" of Horne Tooke, in 1798. The system of this acute grammarian, which derives the origin of all words from the objects of external perception, and reduces the necessary words of language to two, the *noun* and the *verb*, including all the other parts of speech under the title of *abbreviations*, threw new light on the theory of grammar, opened a new track to the lexicographer, and rendered a more important service to human knowledge than all the discoveries of this age.

The numerous omissions of Johnson, of which he was, in some measure, aware, and the palpable proofs of his deficiency in the knowledge of the northern languages, and of old English literature, led the way to the attempts of philologists, to supply the defects of the *English Dictionary*, without detracting from the indisputable excellence of the plan.

In 1793, the Rev. Herbert Croft, (now Sir Herbert) "the pupil of his great friend and mighty master," issued proposals for publish-

ing by subscription, "A new edition of Johnson's Dictionary, corrected, without the smallest omission; considerably improved; and enlarged with more than *twenty thousand* words, illustrated by examples from the books quoted by Johnson, and from others of the best authority in our own and former times;" to be printed in four volumes, folio, price twelve guineas. In the design of this magnificent work, the publication of which is delayed for want of suitable encouragement, the author "did not venture to include Scottish, old English, or provincial language;" but he has given ample proofs of his knowledge of the Low and High German dialects, and of the adequacy of his qualifications for compiling a more comprehensive dictionary of the English language, in "A Letter from Germany to the Princess Royal of England, on the English and German languages," &c. printed at Hamburgh, 4to, 1797. After a toil of many years, it is to be hoped that the public will now enable this accomplished scholar to com-

plete his vast design, by its liberal patronage.

Amongst the attempts of this kind which followed the proposals of Mr Croft, may be mentioned Mason's "Supplement to Johnson's Dictionary, of which the palpable errors are attempted to be rectified, and its material omissions supplied," 4to, 1801; and Boucher's "Supplement to Dr Johnson's Dictionary of the English language, or a Glossary of obsolete and provincial words," 4to, 1807; as they coalesce with, and improve, in some degree, the *English Dictionary*, without pretending to supersede that invaluable work; the foundation on which, imperfect as it is, every attempt to improve and extend the lexicography of our country is to rest. *

After the publication of the *Dictionary*, Johnson meditated an excursion to his native city, to receive the reward of his ap-

* Besides the efforts of Sir Herbert Croft, and others, in this country, to improve this invaluable gift, preparations

plication, in the joy of "a mother more than eighty years old, who has counted the days," he writes to Mr Langton, May 6th, "to the publication of my book; and to her, if I can disengage myself here, I resolve to go. When the duty that calls me to Lichfield is discharged, my inclination will carry me to Langton." * We find no trace of his excursion to Lichfield at this time.

He probably staid in town "long enough to watch the progress of the *Dictionary* into the world;" and, towards the end of July, he was at liberty to make a short visit to Oxford, to discharge his debt of gratitude for the services of his friends, and to exercise his new academical privilege; upon which he set a high value.

are going forward by Mr Webster, in America, to supply the defects of Johnson, chiefly respecting the insertion of words that do not belong to the language; the injudicious selection of authorities; the want of just discrimination in the definitions; and the inaccuracy of the etymologies. See "Letter to Dr Ramsay," &c. 1807.

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. 1. p. 254.

In this year, he wrote for Mr Zechariah Williams, father of his domestic companion, "An account of an attempt to ascertain the longitude at sea, by an exact theory of the magnetic needle; with a table of the variations at the most remarkable cities in Europe, from the year 1660 to 1860," 4to. It was accompanied with an Italian translation, on the opposite page, by Mr Baretti, an Italian of considerable literature, who, having come to England a few years before, had formed an intimacy with Johnson. During his stay at Oxford, he placed this pamphlet in the Bodleian library; and for fear of any omission or mistake, he entered, in the great catalogue, the title page of it with his own hand. On a blank leaf is pasted a paragraph from a newspaper, containing a notice of the death and character of Mr Williams, written by Johnson.*

We find, from his correspondence with Mr Warton, that he intended, this year, "to

* Mr Williams had quitted his profession, in hopes of obtaining the great parliamentary reward for the disco-

open a *Bibliotheque*," or literary journal, on the plan of Le Clerc, to be entitled, *The Annals of Literature, Foreign as well Domestic;* for which he had made some provision of materials. The scheme, however, was dropped at the time, and though peculiarly adapted to the versatility of his talents, never resumed.

At the commencement of the year 1756, we find, from his correspondence with Miss Boothby, his confidence and elation depressed by an alarming illness; from which he had scarcely recovered, when the death of that lady, whom he sincerely loved and honoured, and was very unwilling to lose, on the 16th of January, after the solemn warning of a protracted illness, deeply afflicted his mind, prone to contemplate the awful circumstances of mortality, and inclined to dwell on the

very of the longitude, and settled with his daughter in London, in 1730. Failing of success, he was admitted into the Charter-House, the asylum of age and poverty; from which he was removed in 1749. In a narrative published that year, he complains of his expulsion as an act of injustice. He died, July 12, 1755, in his 83d year; "worthy to have ended life with a better fortune."

privations to which he had been subjected in the tender relations of life. Anxious for the prolongation of her life, "I have thought much," he said, "on medicine," and proposed to her a probable remedy, in aid of the advice of Dr Lawrence; which proved unavailing. "I have heard Baretti say," Mrs Piozzi observes, "that when this lady died, Johnson was almost distracted with his grief; and that the friends about him, had much ado to calm the violence of his emotion." * The pure mind of this lady, aspiring to perfection, had imbibed some of the visionary notions of the mystic writers, which did not accord with his opinions; but he acknowledged himself improved by her piety, which was truly venerable and edifying. After perusing a book of this kind, which she recommended, he observes, "I am perhaps as sincere as the writer. In all things that terminate here, I shall be much guided by your influence, and should take or leave by your

* Anecdotes, p. 161.

direction; but I cannot receive my religion from any human hand. I desire, however, to be instructed, and am far from thinking myself perfect. It affords me a new conviction, that in these books there is little new, except new forms of expression, which may be sometimes taken, even by the writer, for new doctrines." * Among his private devotions, we find the following prayer composed on the occasion of her death. †

* *Annals*, &c. p. 135.

† The following characteristic and appropriate epitaph is inscribed on a monument erected to her memory in Ashbourne church, written by the present Sir Brooke Boothby, Bart. The concluding lines, according to the information of the author, refer to the peculiar circumstances of her death.

Could beauty, learning, talents, virtue save
From the dark confines of th' insatiate grave,
This frail memorial had not ask'd a tear
O'er Hill's cold relics, sadly mouldering here.
Friendship's chaste flame her ardent bosom fir'd,
And bright Religion all her soul inspir'd.

"O Lord God, Almighty disposer of all things, in whose hands are life and death; who givest comforts and takest them away; I return thee thanks for the good example of Hill Boothby, whom thou hast now taken away; and implore thy grace, that I may improve the opportunity of instruction which thou hast afforded me, by the knowledge of her life, and by the sense of her death; that I may consider the uncertainty of my present state, and apply myself earnestly to the duties which thou hast set before me; that, living in

Her soul too heavenly for an house of clay,
Soon wore its earth-built fabric to decay.[a]
In the last struggles of departing breath,
She saw her Saviour gild the bed of death;
Heard his mild accents tun'd to peace and love,
Give glorious welcome to the realms above:
In those bright regions, that celestial shore,
Where friends long lost shall meet to part no more:
"Bless'd Lord, I come!" my hopes have not been vain:
Upon her lifeless cheek ecstatic smiles remain.

[a] She died in her 48th year. In note p. 205, it is the peerage of *Cobham*, not *Brooke*, which is claimed by her family.

thy fear, I may die in thy favour, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." ‡

Having sold his share in the property of the *Rambler*, and spent, during the progress of the work, the money for which he had contracted to write his *Dictionary*, he was still under the necessity of exerting his talents, "in making provision for the day that was passing over him." The profits of his miscellaneous essays, were now his principal resource for subsistence; and it is melancholy to find, from the following letter to Richardson, dated Gough-square, March 16, 1756, that they were insufficient to ward off the distress of an arrest, on a particular emergency.

"I am obliged to intreat your assistance; I am now under an arrest for five pounds eighteen shillings. Mr Strahan, from whom I should have received the necessary help, in this case, is not at home, and I am afraid of not finding Mr Millar. If you could be so good as to send me this sum, I will very

* *Prayers and Meditations*, &c. p. 25.

gratefully repay you, and add it to all former obligations." In the margin of this letter, there is a memorandum in these words:—"March 16, 1756. Sent six guineas. Witness Wm Richardson."

"For the honour of an admired writer," says Mr Murphy, "it is to be regretted that we do not find a more liberal entry. Had an incident of this kind occurred in one of his romances, Richardson would have known how to grace his hero; but in fictitious scenes, generosity costs the writer nothing." * This anecdote may appear to support the parsimo- of the author, whose hero gives most profusely; but something may still be said in favour of Richardson. All that Johnson asked was a temporary supply; and that was granted. There was certainly no ostentatious liberality; but a kind action seems to have been done, without delay, and without grudging.

Besides the necessity he was under of engaging in short compositions, for immediate

* Essay, &c. p. 87.

subsistence, some kind of literary occupation was necessary to the preservation of his mind from dejection and melancholy. Accordingly, notwithstanding his constitutional inactivity, he was ever ready to furnish Prefaces and Dedications to the works of his friends, and willing to give his assistance in the compilation of Magazines and Reviews, projected by the booksellers.

This year, he contributed to a publication entitled "The Universal Visiter, and Monthly Memorialist," for the assistance of Smart the poet, one of the stated undertakers,* with whose unhappy vacillation of mind he sincerely sympathized, the essays marked with two *asterisks;* except the "Life of Chaucer," "Reflections on the state of Portugal," and an "Essay on Architecture," which want all the characteristical marks of his composition. *Further thoughts on Agriculture,* being the se-

* Richard Rolt, a voluminous compiler, was the other undertaker. According to Sir John Hawkins, Mr Garrick and Bishop Percy were contributors to this miscellany, for the same benevolent purpose.

quel of a very inferior essay on the same subject, *A Dissertation on the State of Literature and Authors*, and *A Dissertation on the Epitaphs written by Pope*, though not marked in the same manner, are certainly the production of Johnson. The last of these, indeed, he afterwards appended to the second volume of the *Idler*.

He engaged also to conduct a monthly publication, entitled, "The Literary Magazine, or Universal Review," projected by Mr Newbery; the first number of which came out on the 15th of May, this year. He continued to write in it, with intermissions, till the 15th number. His original essays are, *The Preliminary Address; An Introduction to the Political State of Great Britain; Remarks on the Militia Bill; Observations on his Britannic Majesty's Treaties with the Empress of Russia, and the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel; Observations on the State of Affairs in* 1756; and, *Memoirs of Frederick II. King of Prussia*. His reviews of the works of others are, "Birch's History of the Royal Society;" "Murphy's

Gray's-Inn Journal," "Warton's Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope, vol. 1." "Hampton's Translation of Polybius," "Blackwell's Memoirs of the Court of Augustus," "Russell's Natural History of Aleppo," "Four Letters from Sir Isaac Newton to Dr Bentley, containing some Arguments in proof of a Deity," Borlase's History of the Isles of Scilly," "Home's Experiments on Bleaching," "Browne's Christian Morals," "Hales on Distilling Sea-water, &c." "Lucas's Essay on Waters," "Keith's Catalogue of the Scottish Bishops," "Browne's History of Jamaica," "Philosophical Transactions, vol. 49." "Mrs Lennox's Translation of Sully's Memoirs," "Miscellanies, by Elizabeth Harrison," "Evans's Map, and Account of the Middle Colonies in America," "Letter on the case of Admiral Byng," "Appeal to the people concerning Admiral Byng," "Hanway's Eight Days' Journey, and Essay on Tea," "The Cadet, a Military Treatise," "Some further particulars in relation to the

case of Admiral Byng, by a Gentleman of Oxford," "The Conduct of the Ministry relating to the present War, impartially examined," and "Jenyns' Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil."

In his original essays, he displays extensive political knowledge, acuteness and sagacity of observation, elegance and energy of style, and the graces of superior composition. The *Life of Frederick*, which terminates with the year 1745, in point of language, arrangement, and perspicuity, is a model of the biographical style. Some of his reviews are very short accounts of the pieces noticed; but many of them are examples of judicious and elegant criticism, particularly the reviews of Warton's "Essay," Sir Isaac Newton's "Four Letters," and Blackwell's "Memoirs." His review of Jenyns's "Free Enquiry," is an elaborate disquisition on a subject of great metaphysical obscurity, in a most masterly style, and justly reckoned one of the finest specimens of criticism in our language. This

article was so eagerly read, that he was induced to reprint it in a separate publication*. In his review of Hanway's "Essay on Tea," he fairly repels his violent attack upon that popular beverage, and describes himself as "a hardened and shameless tea-drinker, who has for twenty years diluted his meals with only the infusion of this fascinating plant; whose kettle has scarcely time to cool; who with tea amuses the evening, with tea solaces the midnight, and with tea welcomes the morning." Mr Hanway wrote an angry answer to his playful animadversions in "the Gazetteer" of May 26, 1756; and Johnson, after a full and deliberate pause, made *A Reply* to it; the only instance in the whole course of his life, when he condescended to oppose any thing that was written against him. Of the benevolent Mr Hanway he said, "I still esteem him as one who has the *merit of meaning*

* Mr Jenyns never forgave the author of the Review. After he had suppressed his resentment during Johnson's life, he gave it vent in a petulant and illiberal mock epitaph, unworthy of his understanding and his heart.

well, and still believe him to be *a man whose failings may be justly pardoned for his virtues.*" *

This year, he gave an edition of Sir Thomas Browne's "Christian Morals," with the *Life of the Author*, which is one of his best biographical performances. He wrote also a *Dedication to the Earl of Rochford*, and a *Preface* to Payne's "Essay on the Game of Draughts," and accepted the humble reward of a guinea from Dodsley, for writing the *Preliminary Discourse*, to "The London Chronicle;" an evening newspaper, and, even in so slight a performance, exhibited peculiar excellence.

The *English Dictionary* being designed for the use of such as aspire to exactness of criticism or elegance of style, he, this year, published an *Abstract* of the folio edition, in 2 vol. 8vo, for the benefit of those who know not any other use of a dictionary than that of adjusting orthography, and explaining terms of science, or words of infrequent occurrence, or remote derivation. In the *Abridgement* of the

* Literary Magazine, vol. ii, p. 253.

Dictionary, he retained the *Grammar of the English Tongue.*

This year, he resumed the scheme of giving a new edition of Shakespeare, which had formerly miscarried, and issued *Proposals* of considerable length. The booksellers readily agreed to his terms, and his friends exerted themselves to procure subscriptions, as a resource for the supplies of the day; which, as he confessed, was the inciting motive to the undertaking. Such was his fancied activity, that he promised his work should be published before Christmas 1757, though it was nine years before it saw the light.

The narrative of the occurrences of this year having brought the present writer to the commencemement of Bishop Percy's acquaintance with Johnson, through his intimacy with Dr Grainger,* a familiar visitant in Gough-square, he will be pardoned for pausing to re-

* See the Life of Grainger, "Works of the British Poets," vol. x. p. 891. An enlarged account of the author of "the Sugar-cane," has been drawn up by the

flect on the friendship of the venerable prelate, whose recollections concerning him occasionally embellish these pages, and who himself now needs the pen of an affectionate biographer to commemorate his distinguished talents and virtues.*

At a subsequent period, when Bishop Percy lived much at Northumberland-house, and his acquaintance with Johnson had been

present writer, for a separate edition of his works, in 2 vols. 8vo, undertaken at the suggestion, and augmented by the assistance of Bishop Percy.

* The following obituary notice, the faithful tribute of affection, veneration, and gratitude, imperfect though it be, may not improperly occupy a little space in a narrative that owes its best recommendation to his annotations. His excellencies and virtues deserve a more ample eulogy than this brief memorial can bestow.

Died at Dromore-house, on the 30th of September, 1811, aged 82, the Right Reverend Dr Thomas Percy, lord bishop of Dromore, fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, and member of the Royal Irish Academy; well known, for more than half a century, by various learned and ingenious publications, and distinguished by the most active and exemplary public and private virtues. In him literature has lost one of its brightest ornaments

improved into an intimate and companionable familiarity, we find the dignified English moralist appreciating the merit of the learned

and warmest patrons. His ardour of genius, his fine classical taste, his assiduity of research, and his indefatigable zeal in its cause, were such as were possessed by the distinguished few, and which will for ever render his name dear to learning and science. He was the intimate friend of SHENSTONE, JOHNSON, GOLDSMITH, and GRAINGER, and the last of the illustrious association of men of letters who flourished at the commencement of the present reign. He was born at Bridgnorth, in Shropshire, of a family descended from the noble house of Northumberland,* educated at Newport school, and chosen, at the age of 17, with great approbation, to an exhibition in Christ Church College, Oxford. He took orders, and assisted, for some time, a clergyman in the neighbourhood of Bridgnorth. In 1756, he took the degree of A. M. and was presented to the rectory of Easton-Maduit, in Northamptonshire, in the gift of his College, which he held with the rectory of Wilbye, in the same county, given him afterwards by the Earl of Sussex. About the same time, he married Miss Anne Goodrich, a young lady of great merit and beauty, upon whom he wrote the song, beginning, 'O Nancy wilt thou go with me.' In 1761, he began his literary career, and published, 'Hau Kiou Chouan,' a translation from the Chinese; which was followed, in

* See Nash's Worcestershire, Vol. ii, p. 318.

and elegantly accomplished English antiquary, with a warmth of affection, and an energy of approbation very difficult to deserve.

1762, by a collection of 'Chinese Miscellanies;' and, in 1763, by 'Five pieces of Runic Poetry,' translated from the Islandic language. In 1764, he published a new version of the 'Song of Solomon,' with a commentary and annotations. The year following, he published the 'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry,' a work which constitutes an era in the history of English literature in the 18th century. The same year, he published 'A Key to the New Testament,' a concise manual for students of sacred literature, which has been adopted in the universities, and often reprinted. After the publication of 'The Reliques,' which he dedicated to the noble heiress of his illustrious family, he was invited by the Duke of Northumberland to reside occasionally with him as his domestic chaplain. In 1769, he published a 'Sermon preached before the Sons of the Clergy.' In 1770, he conducted the 'Northumberland Household Book' through the press. The same year, he published 'The Hermit of Warkworth,' and a translation of Mallet's 'Northern Antiquities,' with notes. In 1769, he was nominated chaplain in ordinary to his Majesty; in 1778, promoted to the deanery of Carlisle; and, in 1782, to the bishopric of Dromore; where, during the remainder of his life, from a high sense of duty, he constantly resided; promoting the instruction and comfort of the poor with unremitting attention, and superintending the sacred and civil interests of the diocese with vigilance and

"Percy is a man," he says to Mr Boswell, "whom I never knew to offend any one. He is a man very willing to learn, and very able to teach; a man out of whose company I never

assiduity; revered and beloved for his piety, liberality, benevolence, and hospitality, by persons of every rank and religious denomination. The episcopal palace, which none of his predecessors had inhabited before, and the demesne, formerly rude and uncultivated, owe the magnificence and picturesque beauty which they possess to the elegance of his taste. His publications subsequent to that period were, "A sermon preached before the Society for promoting English Protestant Schools in Ireland,' in 1790; an edition of 'Goldsmith's Miscellaneous Works, with some account of his Life and Writings' * in 1801; and an edition of 'Surrey's Poems, with a series of compositions in Blank verse, to the time of Milton,' in 1806, of which almost the whole impression was destroyed by an accidental fire. He printed, at an early period, a volume of the 'Works of Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, with notes on the Rehearsal,' which has not been published; and translated 'Ovid's Heroic Epistles,' of which a specimen is printed in Grainger's Tibullus. The materials of a new volume of 'The Reliques' have been, for some time, prepared for publication. His extensive library, which he continued to

* Some disparaging passages in the Life were inserted by another hand, without his knowledge and approbation.

go without having learned something. It is sure that he vexes me sometimes, but I am afraid it is by making me feel my own ignorance. So much extension of mind, and so much minute accuracy of enquiry, if you survey your whole circle of acquaintance, you will find so scarce, if you find it at all, that you will value Percy by comparison. Lord Hailes is somewhat like him, but Lord Hailes does not perhaps go beyond him in research, and I do not know that he equals him in elegance. Percy's attention to poetry has given

augment, is rich in classical and Old English literature, history, and poetry. The manuscript collections are numerous, and many of the books are enriched by his maginal notes. Under the loss of sight, of which he was gradually deprived some years before his death, he steadily maintained his habitual cheerfulness, active benevolence, and liberal curiosity; and in his last painful illness, *(ischuria)* he displayed such fortitude and strength of mind, such patience and resignation to the Divine will, and expressed such heart-felt thankfulness for the goodness and mercy shewn to him during the course of a long and happy life, as were truly impressive, and worthy of that pure christian spirit in him so eminently conspicuous. Having survived his nephew, Dr Percy, of St John's College, Oxford, he was the last

grace and splendour to his studies of antiquity. A mere antiquarian is a rugged being." *

This year, the Ivy-Lane club was dissolved. The death of some, and the dispersion or necessary avocations of others, left the founder of the society with fewer members around him than were able to support it with animating conversation.

About this period, he was offered by Mr Langton, the father of his much beloved friend, a living of considerable value in Lincolnshire, if he would engage in a profession in which the best faculties of man may be employed to the best purpose. But he declined, from conscientious motives, this mode of provision. "I have not," said he, "the requisites for the

male descendant of the ancient family of Percy. He had the affliction to survive Mrs Percy about five years. Two daughters survive him: the eldest is married to Ambrose Isted, Esq: of Ecton, in Northamptonshire; and the youngest to the honourable and reverend Pierce Meade, archdeacon of Dromore.

* Boswell's Life, &c. Vol. i, p. 298.

clerical office; and I cannot in my conscience shear that flock which I am unable to feed." He was persuaded that his temper and habits rendered him unfit for the assiduous and familiar instruction of "a great number of poor ignorant persons, who, in religious matters, had, perhaps, every thing to learn."* On this subject, he has dilated in the *Adventurer*, No. 126, with his usual ability.

In the year 1757, besides the contributions, above mentioned, to the "Literary Magazine," which, after he ceased to write in it, gradually declined, and in July 1758 expired, he wrote the *Preface* to "A New Dictionary of Trade and Commerce, &c. by Mr Rolt;" which displays a clear and comprehensive knowledge of the subject; though, as he told Mr Boswell, he never saw the man, and never read the book. "The booksellers," said he, "wanted a Preface to a Dictionary of Trade and Commerce. I knew very well what such a Dic-

* Hawkins's Life, &c. p. 365.

tionary should be; and I wrote a Preface accordingly." * His attention had been directed to that branch of knowledge, by having himself engaged, about this time, in a *Commercial Dictionary*, under the auspices of Mr Hamilton, the printer. After several sheets were printed off, for which he was paid his price, he relinquished the undertaking; probably on finding himself anticipated by Mr Rolt, whose meagre compilation owes its chief recommendation to his preliminary discourse.

He also wrote, this year, for Mr Newbery, the *Dedication, to the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in Parliament assembled,* of "The Evangelical History of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, harmonized, explained, and illustrated, &c. By a Society of Gentlemen, &c.;" which Mr Boswell has rejected without due consideration; though it was copied into the "Literary Magazine," while he was the editor of that publication; and

* Mr Boswell has misplaced this publication under the year 1761.

may be justly regarded as an admirable addition to the many proofs he has given of his excellence in this species of composition. *

He printed, this year, a part of his *Shakespeare*, "to prove that he was in earnest,"

* The *Dedication* is as evidently the production of Johnson, as any which have been ascribed to him from internal evidence. Mr Boswell, however, cannot allow that he wrote it, because "he was no croaker, no declaimer against the *times*;" an assertion which is contradicted by the tenor of some of his writings before the present reign, and even by some of the conversations recorded by his biographer. In a copy of the "Evangelical History," in the possession of the present writer, is the following manuscript note, which is transcribed, as it ascertains the real author of the work, and establishes Johnson's claim to the *Dedication*.

'Extract from a letter of the Rev. Mr Lindsay, upon being asked if he was concerned in compiling this work.'

12*th June*, 1761.

——"and a set of "The Evangelical History," (in 2 vols.) bound, are ready for packing. This latter was indeed compiled by me alone; but the bookseller, (at whose request I wrote it,) had a mind to make a *society*, by desiring Mr Johnson, the Dictionarian, to adorn it with a Dedication, to persons with whom I never had the honour of any correspondence."

'Mr Lindsay, at same time, sent me a few copies of a new title page, of which this, on the reverse, is one, agreeable to what he wrote me above. C. G.'

In the new title page, JOHN LINDSAY is substituted in place of the SOCIETY OF GENTLEMEN, and the whole dedicated, as above, by ANOTHER HAND.

and dictated *A Speech on the Subject of an Address to the Throne,* after the unfortunate expedition to Rochefort, which was delivered by one of his friends at a public meeting. It is printed in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for October 1785, and bears the characteristic marks of his composition.

His literary engagements, whatever they were, engrossed but little of his time. In the intervals of exertion, the season of the greatest danger, he resigned himself, Mr Murphy tells us, "to indolence, and his wandering reveries, *vacuæ mala somnia mentis.* He took no exercise; rose about two; and then received the visits of his friends. Authors, long since forgotten, waited on him as their oracle, and he gave responses in the chair of criticism. His house was filled with a succession of visiters, till four or five in the evening. During the whole time he presided at his tea-table." * To this practice he was always in-

* Essay, &c. p. 88.

clined, and in part of his life, almost compelled by morbid melancholy, and weariness of mind.

In the beginning of the year 1758, the balance of the account of his *Dictionary* being against him, and the subscriptions taken in for his *Shakespeare* not very successful, he found it necessary to retrench his expences, and leave off house-keeping. Accordingly, he gave up his house in Gough-square, and took chambers in Gray's Inn; and Miss Williams went into lodgings in a boarding school in the neighbourhood.

After an interval of four years, spent in a perpetual struggle with difficulties, and infrequent and irregular exertions of industry, he again resumed the employment of a periodical essayist, and engaged, for immediate subsistence, in a weekly newspaper, called "The Universal Chronicle, or Weekly Gazette," set up by Mr. Newbery, a man of a projecting head, good taste, and great industry. To this paper, which came out every Saturday,

he furnished a series of essays, under the title *The Idler*, which was continued regularly for two years. The first number appeared on Saturday, April 15, 1758, and the last is dated, April 5, 1760. Of 103, the total number of essays, Nos. 33, 93, and 96, were contributed by Mr Warton; No. 67, by Mr Langton; Nos. 76, 79, and 82, by Sir Joshua Reynolds; the concluding words of No. 82, "and pollute his canvas with deformity," being added by Johnson; and Nos. 9, 15, 42, 54, 59, and 98, by unknown correspondents. On the republication of the essays in volumes, he omitted No. 22. of the original edition, and substituted what now stands under that head. He likewise added to the second volume, his *Essay on Epitaphs*, and *Dissertation on the Epitaphs of Pope*. *A short Essay on the Bravery of the English common soldiers*, appended to some editions, was not inserted by Johnson in the early editions. His remuneration, it is said, was a share in the profits of the "Chronicle;" but it appears from an *Advertisement*, Jan. 5,

1759, written by Johnson, in order to suppress the practice of transferring "essays, for which a very large price is paid," into other publications, without acknowledgment, that he had his price for the composition of the *Idlers*, as a separate concern.

The *Idlers*, adapted to a limited space in a newspaper, are in general little more than half the length of the *Ramblers*, printed singly; and are seldom accompanied by a motto, the usual ornament of a periodical paper. Mr Boswell tells us, that they were sometimes written as hastily as an ordinary letter, and without any provision of materials. "Mr Langton," he relates, "remembers Johnson, when on a visit at Oxford, asking him one evening, how long it was till the post went out? and, on being told, about half an hour, he exclaimed, 'then we shall do very well!' He, upon this, instantly sat down, and finished an *Idler*, which it was necessary should be in London the next day. Mr Langton having signified a wish to read it; 'Sir,' said he, 'you shall not do more

than I have done myself.' He then folded it up, and sent it off." *

The *Idler*, as the assumed character requires, is less solemn and austere than the *Rambler*. The character of an *Idler*, assumed in the first number, is preserved with undeviating consistency, and delicate irony. In that character, he describes the miseries of idleness, with the lively sensations of one who has felt them, and exhibits admirable instances of grave humour, of which he had an uncommon share. The aim of the *Idler* is to convey instruction by the invention of pleasing fictions, and the representation of humorous characters; but he occasionally mingles the decisions of criticism with the delineations of fancy. He still continues his observations on life and manners, and employs the powers of reason and eloquence in inculcating morality and piety; but he seldom displays profundity of thought; and often descends to common occurrences, and the topics of

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. 1. p. 292.

the day. The *Idler* is evidently the work of the same mind that produced the *Rambler;* but it is written with abated vigour of thought and expression, and greater ease and facility of language. In the *Idler*, he has exhibited his talents for dry and sarcastic humour to the greatest extent; the sketches of character, considering the shortness of the work, are more numerous than in the *Rambler*; and it displays a more intimate knowledge of familiar life. Among the grave papers, which shew more intense thinking and labour of language, may be enumerated, Nos. 14, 24, 41, 43, 51, 52, 58, and 89. Among the papers of which vivacity and delicate irony are the prominent features, may be reckoned, Nos. 5, 6, 8, 10, 16, 19, 21, and 28. The character of *Sober*, No. 31, intended as a portrait of himself, is entitled to particular notice. The prominent features are faithfully pourtrayed, and easily recognisable. No man was ever more sensible of his own weaknesses.

"*Sober* is a man of strong desires, and quick imagination, so exactly balanced by

the love of ease, that they can seldom stimulate him to any difficult undertaking; they have, however, so much power, that they will not suffer him to be quite at rest; and though they do not make him sufficiently useful to others, they make him at least weary of himself.

"*Mr Sober's* chief pleasure is conversation; there is no end of his talk, or his attention; to speak or to hear is equally pleasing; for he still fancies that he is teaching or learning something; and is free, for the time, from his own reproaches.

"But there is one time at night when he must go home, that his friends may sleep; and another time in the morning, when all the world agrees to shut out interruption. These are the moments of which poor *Sober* trembles at the thought. But the misery of these tiresome intervals he has many means of alleviating. He has a small furnace which he employs in distillation, and which has long been the solace of his life. He draws oils, and waters, and essences, and spirits, which

he knows to be of no use; sits and counts the drops as they come from his retort; and forgets that, whilst a drop is falling, a moment flies away.

"Poor *Sober!* I have often teased him with reproof, and he has often promised reformation; for no man is so much open to conviction as the *Idler*; but there is none on whom it operates so little."

In January 1759, his mother died, at the age of ninety; an event which deeply affected him. When she was near her dissolution, he set out for Lichfield, to pay the last duties of filial piety to a parent whom he loved; but he did not arrive in time to close her eyes. He attended the funeral, which, it appears, by his diary, was on the 23d of January 1759; and dedicated an admirable paper in the *Idler*, on the 27th of that month, to her memory.

"She was slight in her person," he told Mrs Piozzi, "and rather below than above the common size. So excellent was her character, and so blameless her life, that when an oppressive neighbour once endea-

voured to take from her a little field she possessed, he could persuade no attorney to undertake the cause against a woman so beloved in her narrow circle; and it is this incident he alludes to in the line of his *Vanity of Human Wishes*, calling her

"The general favourite, as the general friend."*

He regretted much his not having gone to see her for several years previous to her death. She counted the days to the publication of his *Dictionary*, "in hopes of seeing him;"* but his literary engagements deprived him of the comfort of visiting her. He had, however, long contributed liberally to her support.

On this event, he wrote his *History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, for the affectionate purpose of defraying the expences of her funeral, and paying some small debts which she left. He told Sir Joshua Reynolds that he composed it in the evenings of one week; sent it to the press in portions as it

* Anecdotes, p. 8.

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. i. p. 254.

was written; and had never since read it over. It was published in March or April 1759, in 2 vols. 12mo, for Messrs Strahan, Johnston, and Dodsley, who gave him One hundred pounds for the copy, and Twenty-five pounds more when it came to a second edition.

The popularity of his oriental tales in the *Rambler*, probably induced him to undertake a work of fiction, on a larger scale, in which the grave lessons of preceptive wisdom, and the impressive reflections on human life and the dispensations of Providence, might be enlivened, and rendered more alluring, by a full display of the most splendid, distinct, and luxuriant imagery, and the most captivating harmony of language. The scene of the story is laid in a country that he had contemplated before in his translation of *Lobo's Voyage;* and *Rassela Christos*, the general of Sultan *Sequed*, mentioned in that narrative, probably suggested the name of the hero. Notwithstanding the deficiency of incident and character in the story, curiosity is invited forward by the discussion of interesting questions; and

expectation gratified throughout, by pictures of life, darkened by his constitutional melancholy, and profound moral reflections, forcibly recommended by beauty and sublimity of description, and elegance and harmony of diction. The applause given by the world to the *History of Rasselas*, has been such as must satisfy an author the most avaricious of fame. It has been translated into various modern languages, and received the admiration of Europe.

According to Sir John Hawkins, the tale of *Rasselas* was left incomplete by Johnson, in order to admit of a continuation; and that he had, in fact, meditated a second part, in which he meant to marry his hero, and place him in a state of permanent felicity.* For such a continuation of a tale, which is undoubtedly both elegant and sublime, Johnson was in some measure disqualified, by his estimate of human life, as a state of existence in which all our enjoyments are fugacious, and permanent happiness unattainable. The

* Hawkins's Life, &c. p. 301.

design of exhibiting a contrast to the picture of the evils attendant on humanity, has been executed with much felicity of performance, in a continuation of *Rasselas*, under the title of "Dinarbas," by Miss E. Cornelia Knight,* printed in the year 1790.

While he was employed in writing the *Idler*, and proceeding, though slowly, in his edition of *Shakespeare*, he found time, this year, to translate for Mrs Lennox's English version of Brumoy's Greek Theatre, "*A Dissertation on the Greek Comedy*, and the *General Conclusion* of the work.† He wrote also, for

* The ingenious author of "Marcus Flaminius," "A Description of Latium," and other elegant and classical compositions.

† To the third volume of this work, the following advertisement is prefixed. "In this volume, the Discourse on the Greek Comedy, and the General Conclusion, are translated by the celebrated author of the Rambler. The comedy of the Birds, and that of Peace, by a young gentleman. The comedy of the Frogs, by the learned and ingenious Dr Gregory Sharpe. The Discourse upon the Cyclops, by John Burryau, Esq. The Cyclops, by Dr Grainger, author of the translation of Tibullus."

Mr Newbery, the *Introduction* to a collection of voyages and travels, selected from the writers of all nations, in twenty small pocket volumes, and published by him under the title of "The World Displayed," which contains, in a pleasing style, a curious and learned history of navigation, and the discovery of America, and the islands of the West Indies.

On the controversy arising among the architects of London, concerning the comparative strength of the elliptical and semicircular form of arches, in building Blackfriars-bridge, Johnson engaged in it, in behalf of his friend Mr Gwynn, one of the competitors, and wrote *Three Letters* in "The Gazetteer," in opposition to the elliptical side of the question; but without any illiberal national antipathy to Mr Mylne, the successful competitor, with whom he afterwards lived upon very agreeable terms of acquaintance. Mr Muller, of Woolwich Academy, decided the question in favour of the elliptical arch; and the preference given to the design offered by Mr Mylne, has been

justified by the elegance and stability of the present edifice.

This year, he removed from Gray's Inn to chambers two doors down the Inner Temple-lane; "where he lived," says Mr Murphy, "in poverty, total idleness, and the pride of literature. *Magni stat nominis umbra.* Mr Fitzherbert used to say, that he paid a morning visit to Johnson, intending, from his chambers, to send a letter into the city; but, to his great surprise, found an author by profession, without pen, ink, or paper." * But, whatever may have been his difficulties at this time, he appears to have experienced no diminution of his celebrity by the alteration in his external circumstances. "I have been told," says Sir John Hawkins, "by his neighbour at the corner, that during the time he dwelt there, more enquiries were made at his shop for Mr Johnson, than for all the inhabi-

* Essay, &c. p. 90.

tants put together, of both the Inner and Middle Temple." *

At this time, his black servant, Francis Barber, having left him, and entered on board a man of war, he kindly interested himself in procuring his release from a state of life which he regarded with abhorrence. "No man," he said, "will be a sailor, who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail; for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned." † It appears from Smollett's correspondence with Mr Wilkes, that "the great *Cham* of literature was humble enough to desire his assistance on that occasion." Smollett solicited the benefit of Mr Wilkes's interest with Dr Hay and Mr Elliot, commissioners of the Admiralty. "Our Lexicographer," says he, "is in great distress; he says the boy is a sickly lad, of a delicate frame, and particularly subject to a malady

* Hawkins's Life, &c. p. 363.

† Boswell's Journal of Tour to the Hebrides, p. 126.

which renders him unfit for his Majesty's service."* Mr Wilkes, with the most polite liberality, made application to his friend Dr Hay; and Francis was discharged, as he told Mr Boswell, without any wish of his own, and returned to his master's service.

This year, he found leisure to make a short excursion to Oxford, of which we find the following characteristical notice in his own words, expressive of the complacency of academic pride, and the wantonness of constitutional agility. "I have been in my gown," he says, "ever since I came here. It was, at my first coming, quite new and handsome. I have swum thrice, which I had disused for many years. I have proposed to Dr Vansittart climbing over the wall, but he has refused me. And I have clapped my hands till they are sore, at Dr King's speech."†

* The Life of Dr Smollett, prefixed to his Miscellaneous Works, 6 vols. 8vo, third edition, 1811, p. 75.

† Gentleman's Magazine, April 1785.

In 1760, at the auspicious accession of his present Majesty, " of whom," he said, " we are so much inclined to hope great things, that most of us begin already to believe them," * he participated in the sincere congratulations of the nation. He wrote *An Address of the Painters to George III. on the accession to the Throne of these Kingdoms,* at a period of unparalelled national glory and prosperity; and gave a signal proof of his humanity, by writing *An Introduction to the Proceedings of the Committee for clothing the French Prisoners.* He wrote also, the *Dedication,* for Mr Baretti, of his " Italian and English Dictionary," *to the Marquis of Abreu,* the Spanish Ambassador; and a *Review* of " Mr Tytler's Vindication of Mary Queen of Scots," in the " Gentleman's Magazine " for October.

This year, he was honoured with the homage of Mr Murphy, who addressed to him " A Poetical Epistle," in imitation of the second satire of Boileau, addressed to Moliere.

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. i. p. 323.

The author of "The Orphan of China," conceiving himself to be ill treated by the Reverend Translator of Sophocles, in his "Dissertation on Tragedy," and calumniated by the envy and detraction of bad writers, was vindictive enough to publish this indignant "Epistle," to repel the critical shafts of Dr Francklin, and to spread wide the credit of sharing the abuse of his less fortunate contemporaries.* In the following couplets, towards the conclusion, he compliments the author of the *Rambler* in a just and elegant manner.

"Thou, then, my friend, who seest the dangerous strife
In which some demon bids me plunge my life,
To the Aonian fount direct my feet;
Say, where the Nine thy lonely musings meet?
Where warbles to thy ear the sacred throng,
Thy moral sense, thy dignity of song?
Tell, for you can, by what unerring art
You wake to finer feelings every heart;
In each bright page some truth important give,
And bid to future times thy RAMBLER live.

* This epistle, dated Lincoln's Inn, October 1760, has been reprinted by Mr Murphy, with considerable altera-

In 1761, the world received nothing from his pen, except some *corrections* and *improvements* for a pamphlet written by Mr Gwynn, the architect, entitled, "Thoughts on the Coronation of George III."

In his correspondence with Mr Baretti, on his revisiting Italy this year, he gives him the following account of his way of life. "I have not, since the day of our separation, suf-

tions and additions, in the collection of his works in 7 vols. 8vo, 1786. In collecting his works, it is to be regretted that he should have taken so much pains to rescue from oblivion this epistle, written during the violence of literary dissension, and which bears evident marks of an exasperated mind. The expulsion of the respectable names of Warton and Mason from their former places, cannot easily be defended upon any other ground than caprice or personal dislike. Besides "The Orphan of China," his first tragedy, Mr Murphy produced, from this time, not less than twenty-one dramatic pieces, many of which are deservedly esteemed. In 1792, he presented the English reader with a faithful, though rather paraphrastic translation of the Works of Tacitus, in 4 vols. 4to. In consideration of his age and services, his Majesty conferred upon him, during the last three years of his life, an annual pension of L.200. He died June 8, 1805, in the 78th year of his age. As an ingenious, an elegant, and moral writer, Mr Murphy is entitled to rank in a superior class.

fered or done any thing considerable. The only change in my way of life is, that I have frequented the theatre more than in former seasons. But I have gone thither, only to escape from myself. I have hitherto lived without the concurrence of my own judgment; yet I continue to flatter myself, that when you return you will find me mended. If I were to visit Italy, my curiosity would be more attracted by convents than by palaces; though I am afraid that I should find expectation, in both places, equally disappointed, *and life, in both places, supported with impatience, and quitted with reluctance.*" *

At this period, Goldsmith, by the bare exertion of genius and talents of the highest order, under every disadvantage of person and fortune, was gradually emerging from poverty and obscurity, to the enjoyment of the comforts of life, and admission into the best societies of London. After the publication of his "Enquiry into the present state

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. i. p. 324.

of Polite Literature," in 1759, he had lodgings in Wine-office-court, Fleet-street, where he wrote his "Vicar of Wakefield," attended with the affecting circumstance of his being under arrest. When the knowledge of his situation was communicated to Johnson, he disposed of his manuscript, for sixty pounds, to Mr Newbery, the bookseller, and procured his enlargement. Although the money was then paid, the book was not published till some years after, when his fine poem, "The Traveller," had established his fame.

When Goldsmith first took up his residence in that Court, Bishop Percy informs us, "he was not personally acquainted with Johnson; and the first visit he ever received from that distinguished writer, was on May 31st 1761, when he gave an invitation to him and much other company, many of them literary men, to a supper in these lodgings.

"One of the company then invited,* being intimate with our great Lexicographer,

* Dr Percy, Bishop of Dromore.

was desired to call upon him and take him with him. As they went together, the former was much struck with the studied neatness of Johnson's dress; he had on a new suit of clothes, a new wig nicely powdered, and every thing about him so perfectly dissimilar from his former habits and appearance, that his companion could not help inquiring the cause of this singular transformation. "Why, sir," said Johnson, "I hear that Goldsmith, who is a very great sloven, justifies his disregard of cleanliness and decency, by quoting my practice; and I am desirous this night to shew him a better example." *

From this time, Johnson admitted Goldsmith, an author militant like himself, to his familiar intimacy; and so respectful was the attachment of the latter, and so assiduously did he cultivate his acquaintance, and so studiously copy his manner, that, with more suavity and simplicity than his great master, he became one of the brightest ornaments of

* The Life of Dr Goldsmith, prefixed to his Miscellaneous Works, 4 vols. 8vo, 1801, p. 62.

the Johnsonian school. "Goldsmith," he said to Mr Boswell, not long after, "is one of the first men we now have as an author; and he is a very worthy man too."

In 1762, he appears to have done but little. He wrote, however, a *Dedication to the King*, for the Reverend John Kennedy, rector of Bradley, in Derbyshire, of "A complete System of Astronomical Chronology, unfolding the Scriptures," in a strain of very courtly elegance; and probably furnished the concluding paragraph of the work, which bears the characteristic marks of his style.*

In this year, the fifty-third of his age, Fortune, who had hitherto left him to struggle with the inconveniences of a precarious subsistence, arising entirely from his own labours, gave him that independence which his talents

* The first edition of this work was printed in 1752, under the title of "A new method of stating and explaining the Scripture chronology, upon Mosaic Astronomical principles," &c. Johnson became acquainted with Mr Kennedy, a worthy, but eccentric man, in his visits to Mr Meynell, at Bradley, and Dr Taylor, at Ashbourne.

and virtues, long before, ought to have obtained for him. In the month of July, he was graced with a pension of Three hundred pounds a-year, by the King, as a recompence for the honour which the excellence of his writings, and the benefit which their moral tendency had been of to these kingdoms. He obtained it by the recommendation of the Earl of Bute, then prime minister, upon the suggestion of Mr Wedderburn, at the instance of Mr Sheridan and Mr Murphy.

When the offer was notified to him, his own definition of a *pensioner*, in his *Dictionary*, occurred to him, and he hesitated as to the propriety of his accepting it. But, upon Sir Joshua Reynolds and Mr Murphy telling him, "That he, at least, did not come within the definition," he gave up his scruples, and waited on the Earl of Bute, to thank him. At this interview, his Lordship set his mind perfectly at ease, by repeatedly saying, expressly, "The King's bounty is not given for any thing you are to do, but for what you have done;" a declaration which ought ever

to be remembered to his honour. He expressed his sense of this mark of the royal favour, and of his Lordship's liberality, in a letter to him, dated July 20, 1762, of which, the following paragraph deserves particular notice.

"Bounty always receives part of its value from the manner in which it is bestowed. Your Lordship's kindness includes every circumstance that can gratify delicacy, or enforce obligation. You have conferred your favours on a man who has neither alliance nor interest, who has not merited them by services, nor courted them by officiousness; you have spared him the shame of solicitation, and the anxiety of suspense." *

For this well-earned independence he paid the usual tax. Envy and resentment soon made him the mark to shoot their arrows at. Some appeared to think themselves more entitled to royal favour, and others recollected his political opinions, and sentiments of the reign-

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. i, p. 335.

ing family. By some he was censured as an apostate, and by others ridiculed for becoming a pensioner. Mr Wilkes, in "The North Briton," supplied himself with arguments against the Minister, for rewarding a Tory and a Jacobite; and Churchill, in "The Ghost," satirised his political versatility with the most poignant severity.

> "How, to all principles untrue,
> Not fix'd to old friends, nor to new;
> He damns the pension which he takes,
> And loves the Stuart he forsakes."

By this acceptance of his Majesty's bounty, he had undoubtedly subjected himself to the appellation of a pensioner, to which he had annexed an ignominious definition in his *Dictionary*. He had received a favour from two Scotchmen, against whose country he had joined in the rabble cry of indiscriminating invective. It was thus that even-handed Justice commended the poisoned chalice to his own lips, and compelled him to an awkward,

though not unpleasant penance, for indulging in a splenetic prejudice, equally unworthy of his understanding and his heart.*

The affair itself was equally honourable to the giver and the receiver. The offer was clogged with no stipulations for party services, and accepted under no implied idea of being recompensed by political writings. It was perfectly understood by all parties, that the pension was merely honorary. It is true that Johnson did afterwards write political pamphlets in favour of administration; but it was at a period long subsequent to the grant of his pension, and in support of a minister to whom he owed no personal obligation. It was for the establishment of opinions, which, however

* Johnson's invectives against Scotland, in common conversation, were more in pleasantry and sport than real and malignant; for no man was more visited by natives of that country, nor were there any for whom he had a greater esteem. It was to Dr Grainger, a Scottish physician, that the writer of this note owed his first acquaintance with Johnson, in 1756.

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however esteemed by many unconstitutional, he had uniformly held, and publicly avowed.

This year, he accompanied Sir Joshua Reynolds, in an excursion of some weeks, into Devonshire, from which, he declared, he derived "a great accession of new ideas." They were entertained at the seats of several noblemen and gentlemen, in the west of England; but the greatest part of the time was passed at Plymouth, where they were the guests of Dr Mudge, an eminent physician of that place. The Commissioner of the dock-yard afforded Johnson every facility in examining the particular circumstances of ship-building; and paid him the compliment of ordering the yacht to convey him and his friend to the Eddystone light-house.

The story of a ghost, in Cock-lane, had, this year, gained very general credit in London. Churchill availed himself of the common opinion of Johnson's credulity, and drew a caricature of him under the name of *Pomposo*, in his satirical poem, "The Ghost," repre-

senting him as one of the believers of the story. Johnson made no reply; "for with other wise folks he sat up with the ghost." Posterity must be allowed to smile at the credulity of that period. Contrary, however, to the common opinion of Johnson's credulity, Mr Boswell asserts, that he was a principal agent in detecting the imposture; and undeceived the world, by publishing an account of it in the newspapers, and the "Gentleman's Magazine," for February 1762. Yet, by the circumstances of the examination, he seems to have gone with almost a willingness to believe, and a mind scarcely in suspense. He would have been glad to see a traveller from that undiscovered country, over which, like the rest of mankind, he saw nothing but clouds and darkness.

In 1763, he contributed to "The Poetical Calender," a collection of poems, in monthly volumes, by Fawkes and Woty, a *Character of Collins*, while it was yet distinctly impressed on his memory, which he afterwards ingrafted into his *Life* of that poet, and is justly reckoned one of the most tender, and inter-

esting passages in his poetical biography. He also wrote for Mr Hoole, the *Dedication to the Queen,* of his translation of Tasso, in a strain of exquisite elegance and delicacy.

In the month of May, this year, Mr Boswell, destined to be his biographer, was introduced to his acquaintance by Mr Thomas Davies, the bookseller, and continued to live in the greatest intimacy with him from that time till his death. In him, Johnson found an assiduous, devoted, and intelligent companion; and the world is indebted to him for a portrait of his friend, taken at various sittings, possessing all the freshness of life, and all the prominence of original genius.

On his first visit to Johnson, at his chambers in the Temple, Mr Boswell found nothing prepossessing in his apartment, furniture, and morning dress; which were sufficiently uncouth. "His brown suit of clothes," he tells us, "looked very rusty; he had on a little old, shrivelled, unpowdered wig, which was too small for his head; his shirt neck and knees of his breeches were loose; he

his black worsted stockings ill drawn up, and he had a pair of unbuckled shoes by way of slippers. But all these slovenly particularities were forgotten the moment he began to talk."*

At this early period of his connection with Johnson, as soon as he became accustomed to his peculiar mode of expression, Mr Boswell began the practice of making notes of his highly curious, interesting, and instructive conversation, as illustrative of his character, and modes of thinking, and as displaying his powers of logical ratiocination. The practice is liable to strong objections; but, by good fortune, Mr Boswell obtained the sanction of Johnson's approbation of his scheme; and, in some instances, he appears to have received his assistance in recording, with genuine vigour and vivacity, the exuberant variety of his wisdom and wit.

At one of the evening meetings of the assembled wits, at the Mitre Tavern, in Fleet-street, on the 7th of July, Mr Boswell relates

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. 1. p. 355.

the following remarkable instance of Johnson's profound and liberal way of thinking, on a very nice constitutional point, which may render people cautious of pronouncing decisively on his belief in the *divine right of Kings*, and the slavish doctrine of *non-resistance*.

"Goldsmith disputed very warmly with Johnson against the well-known maxim of the British constitution, "The king can do no wrong;" affirming, that what was morally false, could not be politically true; and as the king might, in the exercise of his regal power, command, and cause the doing of what was wrong, it certainly might be said, in sense and in reason, that he *could* do wrong." *Johnson.* "Sir, you are to consider, that in our constitution, according to its true principles, the king is the head, he is supreme, he is above every thing, and there is no power by which he can be tried. Therefore it is, Sir, that we hold the king can do no wrong; that whatever may happen to be wrong in government may not be above our reach, by being ascribed to majesty. Redress is always to be

had against oppression, by punishing the immediate agents. The king, though he should command, cannot force a judge to condemn a man unjustly; therefore it is the judge whom we prosecute and punish. Political institutions are formed on the consideration of what will most frequently tend to the good of the whole, although now and then exceptions may occur. Thus, it is better that a nation should have a supreme legislative power, although it may at times be abused. And then, Sir, there is this consideration, that, *if the abuse be enormous, Nature will rise up, and, claiming her original right, overturn a corrupt political system.*"

He wrote, this year, in the "Critical Review," a *Review* of "Telemachus, a masque," by the Rev. George Graham, of Eton College; a beautiful performance, exhibiting the conflict of opposite principles, the contention between pleasure and virtue; "a struggle which," he says, "will always be continued while the present system of nature shall subsist; nor can history or poetry exhibit

more than pleasure triumphing over virtue, and virtue subjugating pleasure."

In the month of January 1764, he paid a visit to the Langton family, at Langton, in Lincolnshire; where, it will not be doubted, he found the "delight" he anticipated, "to hear the ocean roar, and see the stars twinkle, in the company of men to whom Nature does not spread her volumes, or utter her voice, in vain." *

On his return to town in February, to enlarge his circle, and to find opportunities for conversation, the club was founded, which Mr Boswell has denominated, THE LITERARY CLUB, though it was a title they never assumed themselves. †

It was first proposed, Bishop Percy informs us, by Sir Joshua Reynolds to Burke

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. i. p. 255.

† The writer of this note, an early member, is persuaded the club did not exist till after 1764, for he was twice in London that year, and spent much time with Johnson and Goldsmith, and he does not remember to have heard it once mentioned by either of them.

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and Johnson; and the first members were the friends of those three.

Although it might be originally designed, that the number, when complete, should be twelve, yet, for the first three or four years, it never exceeded nine or ten. It was intended, that if only two of them should chance to meet for the evening, they should be able to entertain each other.

The first members, were Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr Johnson, Mr Burke, Dr Christopher Nugent, * Dr Goldsmith, Sir John Hawkins, Mr Langton, Mr Topham Beauclerk, Mr Anthony Chamier, † to whom, afterwards, was added Mr Dyer. ‡

* A physician, father of Mr Burke's wife.

† Under secretary, successively, to Lords Weymouth and Hillsborough, Secretaries of State.

‡ Of this learned, virtuous, and amiable man, who was held in high estimation for his erudition by Johnson, the following obituary notice, at the time of his death, which happened September 14, 1772, was inserted in the public papers by his friend Mr Burke.

They met and supped together every Monday evening, at *The Turk's Head*, in Gerard Street, Soho, and usually sat till a late hour. At the beginning of the year 1768, the number of the attending or efficient members, was reduced, by the secession of Sir John Hawkins and Mr Beauclerk, to eight. Upon this, the Club agreed to elect a supply of new members, and to increase their number to twelve; of which, every new member was to be elected by bal-

"On Monday morning, died at his lodgings, in Castle street, Leicesterfields, Samuel Dyer, Esq. fellow of the Royal Society. He was a man of profound and general erudition, and his sagacity and judgment were fully equal to the extent of his learning. His mind was candid, sincere, benevolent; his friendship disinterested and unalterable; the modesty, simplicity, and sweetness of his manners, rendered his conversation as amiable as it was instructive, and endeared him to those few who had the happiness of knowing intimately that valuable, unostentatious man; and his death is to them irreparable."

The "Letters of Junius," have been ascribed, among others, to Mr Dyer, without sufficient evidence. In the new edition of the old translation of Plutarch's Lives, to which Dryden lent his name, in 6 vols. 8vo, 1759, besides the partial amendment of the whole version, the entire translation of the Lives of Pericles and Demetrius Poliorcetes, proceeded from his pen. See p. 120.

lot; and one vote was sufficient for exclusion.

Mr Beauclerk then desired to be restored to the club; and the following three new members were introduced, on Feb. 15, 1768, Sir Robert Chambers, Bishop Percy, and Mr Colman.

The club continued its regular meetings, every Monday evening, till December 1772, when it was altered to Friday evening; and two vacancies having been occasioned by deaths, they were supplied, on March 12, 1773, by the Earl of Charlemont and Mr Garrick. Two other vacancies occurring soon after, they were filled, on April 2d, by Sir William Jones, and on April 30th by Mr Boswell, both in 1773.

On Friday, March 4, 1774, three new members were added to the club, Mr Fox, Sir Charles Bunbury, and Dr George Fordyce; and the same evening was elected Mr Steevens.

About this time, the number was increased to thirty; and in 1775, instead of supping

once a week, they resolved to dine together once a fortnight, during the sitting of Parlialiament; and now they dine every Tuesday at Parsloe's in St James's street. The number has been gradually increased to thirty-five, and is at present limited to forty. *

The institution of this weekly club, which embraced the circle of his most intimate friends, and a wide range of the most distinguished talents and worth in the metropolis, was a resource for literary conversation and convivial hilarity, that continued, with some losses, and several honourable accessions, to the end of his life. His affection for Sir Joshua Reynolds, the first mover in this association, was founded on a long acquaintance and thorough knowledge of the virtues and amiable qualities of that excellent artist. He declared him to be "the most invulnerable man he knew; whom, if he should quarrel with him, he should find the most difficulty how to

* See Bishop Percy's Life of Dr Goldsmith prefixed to his Miscellaneous Works, Vol. i. p. 72.

abuse." He delighted in the conversation of Mr Burke; though of opposite political opinions. Garrick had introduced him to his acquaintance several years before; and from that time, his constant observation was, "that a man of sense could not meet Mr Burke by accident under a gate-way to avoid a shower, without being convinced that he was the first man in England."

Being now, by the well-bestowed munificence of his Sovereign, in possession of an income which freed him from the apprehensions of want, and exempted him from the necessity of mental labour, he continued, though irregularly, his attention to literature, the means by which he rose to eminence, and enlarged, occasionally, the sphere of his benevolence by the fruits of his industry.

This year, he had a pleasing opportunity of expressing, not only the invariable kindness which he felt for his friends, but his zeal and ardour for their reputation, by writing a *Review* of Grainger's "Sugar-Cane," in the "London Chronicle," in conjunction with

Bishop Percy,* and an *Account* of Goldsmith's "Traveller," in the "Critical Review." He said to Mr Boswell, "there has not been so fine a poem as 'The Traveller,' since Pope's time." The poem was certainly submitted to his friendly revision; and he owned to Mr Boswell that he furnished the 420th line,

"To stop too fearful, and too faint to go;"

and the ten concluding lines, except the last couplet but one:

"How small of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure,
Still to ourselves in every place consign'd,
Our own felicity we make or find;
With secret course which no loud storms annoy,
Glides the smooth current of domestic joy.
The lifted axe, the agonizing wheel,
Luke's iron crown, and Damien's bed of steel;
To men remote from power but rarely known,
Leave reason, faith, and conscience, all our own."

* This summer, Johnson paid a visit to the same, at his vicarage house in Easton-Maduit, near Wellingborough, in Northamptonshire, and spent parts of the months of

About this time he laboured under a severe return of his hypochondriacal disorder; so that, notwithstanding his love of company,

June, July, and August with him, accompanied by his friend Miss Williams, whom Mrs Percy found a very agreeable companion. As poor Miss Williams, whose history is so connected with that of Johnson, has not had common justice done her by his biographers, it may be proper to mention, that, so far from being a constant source of disquiet and vexation to him, although she was totally blind for the last thirty years of her life, her mind was so well cultivated, and her conversation so agreeable, that she very much enlivened and diverted his solitary hours; and though there may have happened some slight disagreements between her and Mrs Desmoulins, which, at the moment, disquieted him, the friendship of Miss Williams contributed very much to his comfort and happiness. For, having been the intimate friend of his wife, who had invited her to his house, she continued to reside with him, and in her he had always a conversible companion; who, whether at his dinners or at his tea-table, entertained his friends with her sensible conversation: And being extremely clean and neat in her person and habits, she never gave the least disgust by her manner of eating; and when she made tea for Johnson and his friends, conducted it with so much delicacy, by gently touching the outside of the cup, to feel, by the heat, the tea as it ascended within, that it was rather matter of admiration than of dislike to every attentive observer. BISHOP PERCY.

he had an aversion to society; the most deplorable symptom of that malady; and declared to Dr Adams, that "he would consent to to have a limb amputated to recover his spirits." *

In the beginning of the year 1765, he accompanied his friend Mr Beauclerk, in a short visit to the University of Cambridge; where, notwithstanding his prejudices in favour of Oxford, and his contempt of the whiggish notions which prevail at Cambridge, he was gratified, during the whole time of his stay, by every mode of kindness, and entertained with all the elegance of lettered hospitality. †

In the month of July, this year, the Provost and senior fellows of Trinity College,

* The writer of this note cannot believe this could possibly happen in the year 1764, or the hypochondriacal fit must have been very short; for he saw him in the spring, summer, and winter of that year, and never found him more cheerful or conversible.

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† See Gentleman's Magazine, for March 1785.

Dublin, at the suggestion of Dr Leland, one of their number, created him Doctor of Laws, as the *diploma* expresses it, *ob egregiam scriptorum elegantiam et utilitatem;* an unsolicited mark of distinction, conferred on the author of the *Rambler* and the *English Dictionary*, which reflects much honour on the judgment and liberal spirit of the members of that learned body. He acknowledged the favour, in a letter to Dr Leland, but he does not appear to have assumed the title in consequence of it.

This year was remarkable for the commencement of his acquaintance with Mr Thrale, one of the most eminent brewers in England, and member of Parliament for Southwark. Mr Murphy, who was intimate with Mr Thrale, having spoken very highly of Johnson's conversation, he was requested to make them acquainted. This being mentioned to Johnson, he accepted an invitation to dinner at Mr Thrale's, and was so much pleased with his reception, both by Mr and Mrs Thrale, and they so much pleased with him, that his invitations to their house were

more and more frequent. He dined with them every Thursday during the winter; and the year following, when his constitutional malady returned with such extreme violence that "he could not stir out of his room for many weeks," and "lamented the horrible condition of his mind, which he said was nearly distracted," they prevailed on him to quit his close habitation in Johnson's Court, and become one of the family. Mrs Thrale undertook the care of his health, and had the honour and happiness of contributing to its restoration; so that Goldsmith told her, "he owed his life to her attention." From that time an apartment was appropriated to him, both in their house in Southwark, and in their villa at Streatham; and he accompanied them in their summer excursions to Brighthelmstone and Wales.

Nothing could be more fortunate for Johnson than this connection. He had, at Mr Thrale's, all the comforts, and even the luxuries of life; his melancholy was diverted, and his irregular habits lessened, by association

with an agreeable and well-ordered family. He was treated with the utmost respect, and even affection. Johnson had a very sincere esteem for Mr Thrale, as a man of excellent principles, a regular scholar, well skilled in trade, of a sound understanding, and of manners such as presented the character of a plain independent English gentleman. He understood and valued Johnson, without remission, from their first acquaintance to the day of his death. Of Mrs Thrale, (now Mrs Piozzi,) a lady of lively parts, improved by education, and agreeable manners "less cannot be said," says Mr Tyers, "than that in one of the latter opinions of Johnson: "If she was not the wisest woman in the world, she was undoubtedly one of the wittiest. To a natural vivacity in conversation, she had reading enough, and the gods had made her poetical." The vivacity, learning, and affability of Mrs Thrale, roused him to cheerfulness and attention, even when they were alone. But this was not often the case; for he found here a constant succession of what gave him the

highest enjoyment. The society of the learned, the witty, and the eminent in every way, who were assembled in numerous companies, called forth his wonderful powers, and gratified him with admiration, to which no man could be insensible.

There is something in the conduct of this worthy possessor of wealth, which the mind loves to contemplate. Next to the possession of great powers, the most enviable qualities, are a capacity to discover, and an inclination to honour them. To the credit of Thrale, let it be recorded, that the patron of literature and talents, of which Johnson sought in vain for the traces in Chesterfield, he found realised in Thrale.

Having been reminded by Churchill, in the poem above mentioned, that his edition of *Shakespeare* had long been due,* he professed to despise the malignity of the reverend sati-

* He for subscribers baits his hook,
And takes their cash—but where's the book?

THE GHOST, Book III.

rist, in reviving the remembrance of that en-engagement; but he confessed he was culpable. To acquit himself of the obligation, he now proceeded vigorously in completing his commentary; and, in the month of October, after a dilatory occupation of nine years, he gave to the world his long-expected edition of *The Plays of William Shakespeare, with the Corrections and Illustrations of various Commentators; to which are added, Notes by Sam. Johnson*, in 8 vol. 8vo; which, as far as it fell short of affording that ample satisfaction which was expected from it, may be ascribed to his not having "read the books which the author read, traced his knowledge to the source, and compared his copies with their originals;" a promise he gave, but was not able to perform. Sir John Hawkins thinks it a meagre work; he complains of the paucity of the notes, of Johnson's want of industry, and indeed unfitness for the office of a scholiast. It was treated with great virulence and illiberality by Dr Kenrick, in the first part of "A Review of Dr Johnson's new edition of Shake-

speare, in which the ignorance or inattention of that editor is exposed, and the poet defended from the persecution of his commentators," 8vo,* which was never completed. It is to be admitted, that he has neither so completely reformed the text, by accurate collations of the first editions, nor so fully and clearly illustrated his author, in his notes, by quotations from the "writers who lived at the same time, immediately preceded, or immediately followed him," as has been done by other able and ingenious critics who have followed him; Mr Steevens, Mr Capel, Mr Malone, Mr Reed, Mr Douce, &c. whose labours have left little to add to the commentaries on Shakespeare. But what he did as a commentator, has no small share of merit, though his researches were not so ample, and his investigations so acute as they might have been. To him the praise is due of having first adopted the plan

* "The remainder of this work, containing similar remarks on the other five volumes of Dr Johnson's Commentary, together with a Review of his *Preface*, will be published with all convenient speed." ADVERTISEMENT.

of illustrating Shakespeare by the study of the writers of his own time. He has enriched his edition with a concise account of each play, and of its characteristic excellence. In the sagacity of his emendatory criticisms, and the happiness of his interpretations of obscure passages, he surpasses every editor of this poet. Mr Malone confesses, "that Johnson's vigorous and comprehensive understanding threw more light on his author, than all his predecessors had done." His *Preface* has been pronounced by that editor to be the finest composition in our language; and, having regard to its subject and extent, it certainly would be difficult to name one possessing a superior claim to such superlative praise. Whether we consider the beauty and vigour of its composition, the abundance and classical selection of its allusions, the justness of the general precepts of criticism, and its accurate estimate of the excellencies or defects of his author, it is equally admirable. He seems to raise his talents upon a level with those of the poet, upon whose works he sits as a critical judge,

to rival, by the lustre of his praises, the splendour of the original, and to follow this eagle of British poetry through all his flights, with as keen an eye, and upon as strong a wing. The *Preface* to his *Dictionary*, correct as it is, must yield the palm of excellence to that prefixed to his *Shakespeare*; but it yields it only because the subject was less favourable to the full display of his powers.

At an early period of his intimacy with Bishop Percy, he concurred with Shenstone, in encouraging, with his warmest approbation, the researches of our learned poetical antiquary, in collecting and preserving such specimens of ancient poetry as might either shew the gradation of our language, exhibit the progress of popular opinions, display the peculiar manners and customs of former ages, or throw light on our earlier classical poets. And, this year, when the indefatigable editor had completed the collection, and enriched English literature by the publication of "The Reliques of Ancient English Poetry," &c. in 3 vols. 8vo, he gave his assistance in writing

the *Dedication to the Countess of Northumberland,* which has not hitherto been ascribed to his masterly pen.* In the subsequent editions of his work, the editor omitted the original *Dedication,* and substituted an elegant and

* The following paragraph of a letter from Bishop Percy, to the present writer, dated, London, June 18, 1800, is transcribed here, as it allows him to say, that although the *Dedication* to "The Reliques" was not entirely written by Johnson, the original editor was willing to attribute all its merit to him. An acknowledgment to the same purpose was afterwards repeated, in the unreserved freedom of conversation at Dromore-house, in the autumn of 1810, almost with his latest breath.

"In your last, you expressed some regret, that in the last edition of 'The Reliques of Ancient Poetry,' I had suppressed the original Dedication. Besides my reason for inscribing the volumes to the *memory* of the Duchess, I must ingenuously confess, that the former Dedication, though not wholly written by him, owed its finest strokes to the superior pen of Dr Johnson; and I could not any longer allow myself to strut in borrowed feathers. When I have honestly confessed this, which, I believe, he never mentioned himself to any one, I hope I shall be believed, when I declare, that I do not recollect that a single expression, sentiment, or observation of any kind besides, was suggested by him in the whole three volumes."

appropriate inscription to the memory of the Duchess of Northumberland.

In 1766, he removed from the Inner Temple-lane, to a good house in Johnson's Court, Fleet-street, in which he accommodated Miss Williams with an apartment on the ground floor, while Mr Levett occupied his post in the garret.

This year, he wrote the *Dedication to the King*, of Mr Gwynn's "London and Westminster improved," and furnished the *Preface*, and the following pieces for Miss Williams's "Miscellanies in Prose and Verse," 4to. *Paraphrase of Proverbs, chap.* vi. *verses* 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11; *To Miss* *****, *on her giving the author a Gold and Silk Net-work Purse of her own weaving; To Miss* ***** *on her playing upon the Harpsichord in a room hung with Flower-pieces of her own painting; Epitaph on Claude Phillips, an Itinerant Musician; Paraphrase of Dr Freind's Latin Epitaph on Sir Thomas Hanmer; On the Death of Stephen Gray, the Electrician;* and *The Fountains, a*

Fairy Tale. The first sketch of the poem *on Stephen Gray*, was written by Miss Williams; but Johnson told Mr Boswell, "that he wrote it all over again except two lines."* This publication was encouraged by a genteel subscription.

In 1767, he wrote the *Life of Roger Ascham*, and the *Dedication to the Earl of Shaftesbury*, prefixed to the edition of his "English Works," published by Mr Bennet; and the *Dedication to the King* for Mr Adams's "Treatise on the Globes."

In the month of February, this year, he was honoured by a private conversation with his Majesty in the library at Buckingham-house, which flattered his literary pride, and gratified his monarchical enthusiasm. This memorable conversation was sought by the King, without the knowledge of Johnson.

* In the above collection, the poem entitled "The Three Warnings," was written by Mrs Thrale, and the "Lines addressed to a Lady of indiscreet virtue," in p. 3. written many years before, were given by the writer of of this note. BISHOP PERCY.

His Majesty entered the room; and, among other things, asked the author of so many valuable works, "If he intended to give the world any more of his compositions?" Johnson modestly answered, "That he thought he had written enough." "And I should think so too," replied his Majesty, "if you had not written so well." Johnson observed to Mr Boswell, upon this reply, that "No man could have paid a handsomer compliment; and it was fit for a king to pay: it was decisive."

"During the whole of this interview," says Mr Boswell, "Johnson talked to his Majesty with profound respect, but still, in his firm, manly manner, with a sonorous voice, and never in that subdued tone which is commonly used at the levee, and in the drawing-room. After the king withdrew, Johnson shewed himself highly pleased with his Majesty's conversation, and gracious behaviour. He said to Mr Bernard (the librarian), "Sir, they may talk of the King as they will; but he is the finest gentleman I have

ever seen." And he afterwards observed to Mr Langton, "Sir, his manners are those of as fine a gentleman as we may suppose Lewis XIV. or Charles II."*

Johnson had now arrived at that eminence which is the prize that cultivated genius always struggles for, and but seldom obtains. His fortune, though not great, was adequate to his wants, and of most honourable acquisition; for it was derived from the produce of his labours, and the rewards which his country had bestowed upon merit. He received, during life, that unqualified applause from the world, which is, in general, paid only to departed excellence, and he beheld his fame seated firmly in the public mind, without the danger of its being shaken by obloquy, or the hazard of its being shared by a rival. He could number among his friends the greatest and most improved talents of the country. His company was courted by wealth, dignity, and beauty. His many peculiarities were

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. ii. p. 41.

overlooked, or forgotten in the admiration of his understanding, while his virtues were regarded with veneration, and his opinions adopted with submission. Of the usual insensibility of mankind to living merit, Johnson at least had no reason to complain.

In 1768, nothing of his writing was given to the public, except the *Prologue* to his friend Goldsmith's comedy of the "Good-Natured Man," which was represented at Covent-Garden Theatre, for the first time, on the 29th of January. The first lines of this *Prologue* are strongly characterised by his own gloomy cast of moralization, and expressed in a strain of solemnity unexampled in an introduction to a comedy.

> "Press'd by the load of life, the weary mind
> Surveys the general toil of human kind."

"The Good-Natured Man" kept possession of the stage for nine nights; but was not judged, by the author's friends, to have had

all the success it deserved. Johnson said "it was the best comedy that had appeared since "The Provoked Husband," and that there had not been, of late, any such character exhibited on the stage, as *Croaker*." * This character, Goldsmith owned, he had borrowed from *Suspirius*, the Screech-owl, in the *Rambler*, (No. 59.) and is a just and poignant ridicule of an anomalous species of visiters who disturb others by painful remembrances of the past, or melancholy prognostics of the future.

In 1769, he was altogether quiescent as an author. This year, he accepted the title of Professor of Ancient Literature in the Royal Academy of Arts, which had been instituted the preceding year; a mere complimentary distinction, attended neither with emolument nor trouble; but which gave him a respectable seat at their occasional meetings, and annual dinners. He owed this honorary professorship to the friendship of Sir Joshua Rey-

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. ii, p. 48.

nolds, the President; who also procured for Goldsmith, the appointment of Professor of Ancient History; which he took rather as a compliment to the institution than any benefit to himself.

In February, this year, he made an excursion to Oxford with Goldsmith, who was admitted in that university *ad eundem gradum*, which, he said, was that of Bachelor of Physic; a degree which he probably took at the university of Padua, when he visited the northern part of Italy, and studied six months in that ancient school of medicine.

In the month of October, the fame and life of Mr Baretti being endangered by his arraignment at the Old Bailey, for stabbing a man in the street, in self-defence, Johnson appeared, for the only time in his life, as a witness in a court of justice, to give evidence to the character of his friend. Mr Burke, Mr Garrick, and Mr Beauclerk, appeared also as witnesses on the trial; and the favourable testimony of such men undoubtedly had due

weight with the jury, who acquitted him of the murder and the man-slaughter.*

In 1770, at the turbulent period of the Middlesex election, which gave rise to a popular and beneficial contest between Government and Mr Wilkes, respecting the validity of his exclusion from the House of Commons, by a resolution of that branch of the legislature, Johnson entered the thorny paths of political discussion; and, prompted by considerations of gratitude, and a high sense of duty, attracted the attention of the public, by the strenuous exertion of his vast comprehensive mind, in support of Government against the prevailing spirit of discontent. A strong bias

* After this unfortunate transaction, which was considered as a calamity rather than a crime, Mr Baretti remained in England during the remainder of his life. He subsisted by teaching the Italian language, and the sale of his writings. On the establishment of the Royal Academy of Arts, he was appointed Foreign Secretary. During Lord North's administration, he obtained a pension of eighty pounds a-year from Government. He died May 5, 1789, in the 70th year of his age.

in favour of the party in opposition to Government, at the close of the last reign, is discernible in his political writings in "The Gentleman's Magazine," and "The Literary Review;" but his vehemence and partiality are more remarkable in the high-toned ministerial pamphlets that proceeded from his pen, in the perilous and unpopular employment which he assumed, of writing for the administration of the day, in the name of the community.

On the occasion of this popular ferment, long kept alive by the persecution of a profligate and designing demagogue, he published, this year, a pamphlet, entitled *The False Alarm*, 8vo.; intended to justify the conduct of ministry, and their majority in the House of Commons, for having virtually assumed it as an axiom, that the expulsion of a member of parliament was equivalent to exclusion, and their having declared Colonel Luttrell to be duly elected for the county of Middlesex, notwithstanding Mr Wilkes had a great ma-

jority of votes. This being very justly considered as a gross violation of the right of election, an alarm for the constitution extended itself all over the kingdom. To prove this alarm to be false was the purpose of Johnson's pamphlet, which was read at the time with avidity; but his arguments and eloquence failed of effect, and the House of Commons has since erased the offensive resolution from the journals. This pamphlet has great merit in point of language; but it contains much gross misrepresentation, and abounds with such arbitrary principles, as are totally inconsistent with a free constitution.

In 1771, he defended the measures adopted by the ministry, in the dispute with the court of Spain, in a pamphlet, entitled, *Thoughts on the late Transactions respecting Falkland's Islands*, 8vo. which ranks among the most splendid of his compositions. On the subject of the negociation respecting the sovereignty of these islands, "spots thrown aside from human use, barren in summer, and stormy in winter," he appears to have followed the di-

rection, and adopted the opinions which the administration wished to inculcate. The convention which terminated the negociation, was considered, in a political view, as a mean and pusillanimous compromise, injurious to the honour of our nation. But, however this may be, the earnest and pathetic dissuasive from offensive war, deliberately renewed by civilized nations, is deserving of the highest applause. The description of its calamities is one of the finest pieces of eloquence in the English language. The keen invective against *Junius*, the able champion of opposition, is executed with all the force of his genius, and pointed with exquisite severity. A battle between two combatants, who knew the use of their weapons, was expected; but *Junius*, whatever was his reason, never returned to the field. He laid down his arms, and has ever since remained in mysterious silence.

When Johnson shone in the plenitude of his political glory, from the celebrity of his ministerial pamphlets, an attempt was made to bring him into the House of Commons, by

Mr Strahan, the king's printer, who was himself in Parliament, and wrote to the secretary of the treasury upon the subject; but the application was unsuccessful. Whether there were any particular reasons for the refusal, has not transpired. That Johnson very much wished to "try his hand" in the senate, he has himself declared; * but that he would have succeeded as a parliamentary speaker, is at least doubtful. Few have distinguished themselves as orators, who have not begun the practice of speaking in public early in life; and it may be doubted whether the habits of regular and correct composition are not unfavourable to that quick, unpremeditated elocution, which is so much admired, and so useful in animated debate. This at least is certain, that of the many persons eminent for literary

* At a later period of his life, when Sir Joshua Reynolds told him, that Mr Burke had said, that if he had come early into Parliament, he certainly would have been the greatest speaker that ever was there; Johnson exclaimed, "I should like to try my hand now!" See Boswell's Life, &c. vol. i, p. 133.

abilities, who have had seats in Parliament, none have gained a reputation for eloquence commensurate with their talents and information; and of Johnson, in particular, it is reported, upon the authority of Sir William Scott, that he had several times tried to speak in the Society of Arts, but "had found that he could not get on." It was observed by Mr Flood, that "Johnson, having been long used to sententious brevity, and the short flights of conversation, might have failed in that continued and expanded kind of argument, which is requisite in stating complicated matters in public speaking." *

* "Johnson spoke as he wrote. He would take up a topic, and utter upon it a number of the *Rambler*. On a question, one day, at Miss Porter's, concerning the authority of a newspaper for some fact, he related, that a lady of his acquaintance implicitly believed every thing she read in the papers; and that, by way of curing her credulity, he fabricated a story of a battle between the Russians and Turks, then at war; and "that it might," he said, "bear internal evidence of its futility, I laid the scene in an island at the conflux of the Bbristhenes and the Danube; rivers which run at the distance of a hundred leagues from each other. The lady, however,

This year, Dr Beattie, preceded by the fame of his writings, and the excellence of his character, was introduced by his countryman, Mr Boswell, to the acquaintance of Johnson. The English moralist professed a liberal regard for the Scottish professor, and held him in high estimation, for his genius and learning, and labours in the service of

believed the story, and never forgave the deception; the consequence of which was, that I lost an agreeable companion, and she was deprived of an innocent amusement." And he added, as an extraordinary circumstance, that the Russian ambassador sent in great haste to the printer, to know from whence he had received the intelligence. Another time, at Dr Taylor's, a few days after the death of the wife of the Rev. Mr Kennedy, of Bradley, a woman of extraordinary sense, he described the eccentricities of the man and the woman, with a nicety of discrimination, and a force of language, equal to the best of his periodical essays. Now, with such powers, and the full confidence he felt in himself before any audience, he must have made an able and impressive speaker in Parliament."

For the communication of the above recollections, the present writer is indebted, among other obligations, to the friendship of Sir Brooke Boothby, Bart. who had frequent opportunities of enjoying the company of Johnson at Lichfield and Ashbourne.

virtue and religion. His acquaintance with Dr Robertson and Dr Blair, Scottish clergymen, distinguished by their excellent writings and estimable qualities, commenced on the occasion of their visiting the English metropolis, some years before.

Although he preferred London, as a place of residence, to all others, as affording more intelligence, and more opportunities of conversation than could be found elsewhere; yet, from this time, we find him dedicating the pleasanter months of the year to excursive amusement; sometimes changing the foul air of Fleet-street for the wholesome breezes of the Sussex Downs; and sometimes rambling into Staffordshire and Derbyshire, renewing affectionate reminiscences, and receiving grateful testimonies of regard, in his native city, or participating the hospitality, and delighting in the novelty and variety of the romantic scenery, and rural occupations of Ashbourne.

In 1772, he produced no literary performance. After his "summer wanderings," we

find him engaged, reluctantly, in a very great work, the revision of the *English Dictionary*, with the assistance of Mr Peyton, one of his original amanuenses.

In 1773, the fourth edition of his folio *Dictionary* was printed, with additions and corrections, from the copy which he was persuaded to revise; but having made no preparation, he was able to add little to its usefulness. "Some superfluities," he says to Mr Boswell, "I have expunged, and some faults I have corrected, and here and there have scattered a remark; but the main fabric of the work remains as it was. I had looked very little into it since I wrote it; and I think I found it full as often better, as worse, than I expected."

His *Shakespeare*, which had gone through several editions, was, this year, republished in 10 vols. 8vo, with great and valuable improvements by Mr Steevens; a commentator deeply skilled in ancient learning, of very extensive reading in English literature, especially

the early writers, and of acute discernment and elegant taste.

"By perseverance," says Mr Reed, "in Dr Johnson's admirable plan of illustrating Shakespeare by the study of the writers of his own time, Mr Steevens has effected more for the elucidation of his author, than any, if not all, his predecessors, and justly entitled himself to the distinction of being confessed the best editor of Shakespeare." *

This year, he wrote the *Preface* to "A Dictionary of Ancient Geography," for Alexander Macbean, his old amanuensis; and *An Epitaph on Mrs Bell*, wife of his friend John Bell, Esq. inscribed on a monument erected to her memory, in the church of Watford, in Hertfordshire.

The autumn of this year is memorable for the gratification of a wish which he had so long entertained, that he scarcely remembered how it was formed, of visiting the Hebrides, or Western Islands of Scotland. He

* Reed's Shakespeare, 21 vols. 8vo, 1803, vol. 1. Advertisement, p. 4.

was accompanied in this excursion by Mr Boswell; "whose acuteness," he observed, "would help his enquiry, and whose gaiety of conversation and civility of manners, were sufficient to counteract the inconveniences of travel, in countries less hospitable than those they were to pass."

He left London on the 6th of August; and, passing through the cathedral cities of York and Durham, and "climbing the towers of Alnwick," reached Edinburgh on the 14th, by the way of Berwick-upon-Tweed. At Darlington, he met his cousin-german, Mr Cornelius Harrison, perpetual curate there; "the only one," he says, "of his relations, who ever rose in fortune, above penury, or in character, above neglect." He was accompanied, as far as Newcastle, by Sir Robert Chambers, on a valedictory visit to his relations, previous to his going a judge to Bengal. On the 18th of that month he left Edinburgh, and directed his course northward, through St Andrews, Dundee, Aberdeen, and Inverness. He then visited the isles of Sky, Rasay, Col, Mull,

Ulva, Inchkenneth, and Icolmkill. Regaining the mainland, he travelled through Argyleshire, by Inverary, and thence by Lochlomond and Dumbarton, to Glasgow. He then proceeded to Auchinleck, in Ayrshire, the family-residence of his fellow-traveller, and thence, by Hamilton, back to Edinburgh, on the 9th of November, after a peregrination of seven weeks and six days; during which he was principally occupied in noting the peculiar features of the Highland and insular manners and scenery, tracing the progress of civilization, and philosophising on the various stages of society. After passing some days in Edinburgh, "with men of learning and women of elegance," he set out on his return to London, on the 22d of November, delighted with the respect and hospitality which he experienced, wherever he went, during his stay in Scotland.

Of the occurrences in his journey, he regularly transmitted an account to Mrs Thrale. "I keep a book of remarks," he tells her in a letter from Sky, "and Boswell writes a regular journal of our travels; which, I think,

contains as much of what I say and do, as of all other occurrences together, "*for such a faithful chronicler* is *Griffith*." *

His various adventures, and the force and vivacity of his mind, as exercised during his tour, have been described by Mr Boswell, in his "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides," 8vo, 1786, in a style that shews he possessed, in an eminent degree, the skill to give connection to miscellaneous matter, and vivacity to the whole of his narrative.

This year, Goldsmith expressed the very high regard and veneration he had for Johnson, in the strongest and most delicate manner, in the Dedication of his new comedy, "She Stoops to Conquer." "By inscribing this slight performance to you," he says, "I do not mean so much to compliment you as myself. It may do me some honour, to inform the public, that I have lived many years in intimacy with you. It may serve the interests of mankind also, to inform them, that

* Shakespeare, Henry VIII.

the greatest wit may be found in a character, without impairing the most unaffected piety."

Of this play, which made its appearance at Covent-Garden, late in the season, and was very successful, Johnson said, "I know of no comedy, for many years, that has so much exhilarated an audience, and has so much answered the great end of comedy---making an audience merry. The dialogue is quick and gay; and the incidents are so prepared as not to seem improbable." *

This year, Mr Davies, the bookseller, published a collection of "Miscellaneous and Fugitive Pieces," in 2 vols. 8vo, which he advertised in the newspapers, "by the author of the Rambler," without his knowledge or consent. In this collection, several pieces were inserted, in which Johnson had no concern. "How," said Mrs Thrale, "would Pope have raved, had he been served so!" "We should never," replied he, "have heard the last on't, to be sure; but then Pope was

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. ii, p. 132.

a narrow man. I will, however," added he, "storm and bluster *myself* a little this time." So he went to London in all the wrath he could muster up. At his return, I asked how the affair ended? "Why," said he, "I was a fierce fellow, and pretended to be very angry; and Thomas was a good-natured fellow, and pretended to be very sorry; and so there the matter ended. I believe the dog loves me dearly." * On this occasion, it was natural for Johnson to be displeased; and his continued kindness for Mr Davies may be regarded as an instance, among many others, of his humane and forgiving disposition.

At the approach of the general election, in 1774, in which his friend Mr Thrale had the prospect of a warm contest, he published a short pamphlet, entitled, "*The Patriot, addressed to the Electors of Great Britain*, 8vo; not with any visible application to Mr Wilkes, then at the height of his popularity; but to

* Anecdotes, &c. p. 55.

define what a real patriot is, and to teach the people to reject the leaders of opposition, who called themselves patriots; and, indirectly, to vindicate the outrage of the House of Commons, with regard to the Middlesex election, and repel the claims of America. This address was called for, he tells us, on Friday, by his political friends, and written on Saturday. It is written with energetic vivacity, but includes much sophistry of argument, much asperity of language, and much sarcastic contempt of his opponents.

The death of Goldsmith, on the 4th of April, after a short illness, deprived Johnson of a friend, endeared to him by habitudes of reciprocal attachment and companionable familiarity; and gave a shock to his mind, ever agitated by the contemplation of mortality, and the dread of his own dissolution. "Poor dear Goldsmith," he tells Mr Langton, "died of a fever, exasperated, as I believe, by the fear of distress. His debts began to be heavy, and all his resources were exhausted. But let not his frailties be remembered; he was a very

great man." * His death was an irreparable loss to English literature. Whether we consider him as a poet, as a comic writer, or an historian, (so far as regards his powers of composition), he was one of the first writers of his time, and will ever stand in the foremost class. Johnson honoured the memory of his friend with a *Latin Epitaph*, inscribed on his monument in Westminster Abbey, and consecrated a *Greek tetrastic*, to the commemoration of the multifarious talents of the departed poet, crowned with the spoils of every art, and decked with the wreath of every muse.

In the summer of this year, he accompanied Mr and Mrs Thrale in a tour through North Wales, "a new part of the island;" which afforded him an opportunity, "with much convenience," of being in five of the six counties of that division of the principality, of seeing St Asaph and Bangor, the seats of their two bishops, of ascending Penmanmawr and Snowden, and of passing over into Angle-

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. ii, p. 285.

sea. This sojourn in Wales contributed to the health and amusement of the traveller, but offered nothing to the speculation of the philosopher. The Welch scenery, resembling, in some of its features, the boldness and sublimity of the Caledonian landscape, did not give occasion, as in his Highland journey, to the descriptive exercise of his pen. He lingered three months among the green mountains and fertile valleys of that rich and beautiful country, chiefly in Denbighshire, but kept no journal or notes of what he saw there.

On his return from Wales, in the month of October, he resumed the printing an account of his tour to the Hebrides, which had been suspended during his absence; and in January 1775, published his interesting narrative, under the title of *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, 8vo. In passing from Anoch to Glensheals, he first conceived the design of writing the relation of his travels, in an *hour* that will ever be regarded as auspicious to the literature of his country.

"I sat down on a bank," he says, "such as a writer of romance might have delighted to feign. I had, indeed, no trees to whisper over my head, but a clear rivulet streamed at my feet. The day was calm, the air was soft; and all was rudeness, silence, and solitude. Before me, and on either side, were high hills, which, by hindering the eye from ranging, forced the mind to find entertainment for itself. *Whether I spent the hour well I know not; for here I first conceived the thoughts of this narration.*"

The narrative which he meditated, in this wild unfrequented region, is very deservedly esteemed a masterly performance, and a model for those journalists of travels, who visit a country, for the purpose of describing the manners and literature of the people, rather than its natural productions and antiquities. On its first appearance, it was variously praised and censured in the newspapers, magazines, and other fugitive publications. By some it was admired for the eloquence and vivacity of the composition, and the depth

of observation on life and manners: by others, it was condemned, for the undue prejudice of the traveller, against both the country and people of Scotland. That it abounds in just and philosophical views of society, and in ingenious sentiments and lively description, must be allowed; but that it contains a deliberate misrepresentation of the country and people of Scotland, no candid and impartial person will affirm. In describing the face of the soil on the eastern coast, he has, unintentionally, given offence, by stating the fact, that it is bare of trees; but to the bold, the sublime, and the wild features of the lake and mountain scenery, he has done ample justice. That Johnson entertained strong prejudices against the natives of Scotland, in general, cannot be denied. It is probable that his rooted aversion to presbyterianism, a prejudice unworthy of his understanding, mingled sometimes with his reflections on the natives of that country. "He thought," as Mr Boswell says, "that their success in England exceeded their proportion of real merit; and he

could not but see in *them* that nationality which no liberal-minded Scotsman will deny." He likewise declared, "that when he found a Scotchman, to whom an Englishman was a Scotchman, that Scotchman should be an Englishman to him." The civilities which he received from the people of Scotland in the course of his journey, he everywhere repaid with such benignity of sentiment and warmth of gratitude, that, notwithstanding his occasional fretfulness, no man can doubt the goodness of his heart. It should not be forgotten, that if in any thing he has been mistaken, he has made a candid apology in the concluding paragraph of his narrative.

"Having passed my time almost wholly in cities, I may have been surprised by modes of life, and appearances of nature, that are familiar to men of wider survey and more varied conversation. Novelty and ignorance must always be reciprocal; and I cannot but be conscious, that my thoughts on national manners are the thoughts of one who has seen but little."

Among other disquisitions in the journal of his travels, he expresses his disbelief of the authenticity of the poems of Ossian, presented to the public by Mr Macpherson, as a translation from the Erse, in such terms as honest indignation is apt to hurl against imposition.

"The Erse," he says, "was always oral only, and never a written language. The bards could not read; if they could, they might probably have written. But the bard was a barbarian among barbarians; and, knowing nothing himself, lived with others that knew no more. If there is a manuscript from which the translation is made, in what age was it written? and where is it? If it was collected from oral recitation, it could only be in detached parts and scattered fragments; the whole is too long to be remembered. Who put it together in its present form? I believe they never existed in any other form than that which we have seen. The editor or author never could shew the

original; nor can it be shewn by any other. To revenge reasonable incredulity, by refusing evidence, is a degree of insolence with which the world is not yet acquainted; and stubborn audacity is the last refuge of guilt."

These, and such like observations, provoked the resentment of Mr Macpherson; he sent a threatening letter to the author; and Johnson answered him in the rough phrase of stern defiance.

"I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me, I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat by the menace of a ruffian.

"What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture: I think it an imposture still. For this opinion, I have given my reasons to the public, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your Homer, are not so formi-

dable; and what I hear of your morals, inclines me to pay regard, not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will."

The threats alluded to in this letter never were attempted to be put in execution. But Johnson, as a provision for defence, furnished himself with a large oak plant, six feet in height, of the diameter of an inch at the lower end, increasing to three inches at the top, and terminating in a head (once the root) of the size of a large orange. This he kept in his bedchamber, so near his chair as to be within his reach.

The scepticism of Johnson concerning Ossian, expressed in his strongest manner, as it awakened public suspicion, gave great offence, and was resented by national bigotry, with anger inflamed to rancour. He was assailed by an host of angry pamphleteers, whose invectives only furnished him with sport; and when, at last, a more formal adversary assaulted him, with a volume of "Remarks

on Dr Johnson's Journey to the Hebrides," * he pleasantly observed to Mr Seward, "They don't know how to go about their abuse. Who will read a five shilling book against me? No, Sir; if they had wit, they should have kept pelting me with pamphlets." †

The opinion of Johnson, as to the authenticity of the poems ascribed to Ossian, formed on a very strict examination of the evidence offered for it, has gained ground with the public, in the space of forty years; and there are now very few unprejudiced persons who persist in believing these poems to be the production of a supposed epic poet of remote antiquity. ‡ He is, however, deserving of censure for suffering his abhorrence of impos-

* By the Rev. Donald M'Nicol, minister of Lismore, 8vo, 1780.

† Boswell's Life, &c. vol. ii, p. 316.

‡ It is remarkable, that in the different prefaces to the poems which Macpherson gave to the world as translations of Ossian, he carefully reserved his latent claims to the rank and merit of an original poet. Indeed he did not conceal, from those with whom he was particularly intimate, that the poems were entirely his own com-

ture to influence his judgment, so far as to maintain that the poems had no intrinsic merit, by declaring to Dr Blair, the advocate of their antiquity and classical pre-eminence, that "such pieces could have been written by many men, many women, and many children," of a modern age.

Having made an effort in *The Patriot* to repel the claims of the American colonies, he

position; as Sir John Elliot, an eminent physician in London, informed Bishop Percy, whose attestation of the fact is given in a letter to the present writer, dated Dromore-house, April 16, 1805.

"The Bishop of Dromore has allowed Dr Anderson to declare, that he repeatedly received the most positive assurances from Sir John Elliot, the confidential friend of Macpherson, that all the poems published by him, as translations of Ossian, were entirely of his own composition."

For a comparative view of the Ossianic controversy, see Mr Shaw's "Observations," &c.; Mr Clark's "Answer;" and Mr Shaw's "Reply," 8vo, 1782; Mr Laing's "Dissertation," &c. in Hist. Scot. iv. 468–93, 2d edit.; and his edition of the "Poems of Ossian," 2 vols. 8vo. 1805; "Report of the Committee of the Highland Society," 8vo, 1805; Dr Graham's "Essay on the Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian," 8vo, 1807; and Mr Grant's "Essay on the Origin of the Gael, &c. 8vo, 1813.

came forward, this year, on the same side, with redoubled zeal, and published a pamphlet, entitled, *Taxation no Tyranny; An Answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress*, 8vo. The scope of his argument was, that distant colonies, which had in their assemblies a legislation of their own, were, notwithstanding, liable to be taxed in a British Parliament, where they had neither peers in one house, nor representatives in the other. He contended for the principle, that legislation involves in it taxation, and every possible power and exercise of civil government. The principle has been long abandoned; but Johnson was of opinion, that this country was strong enough to enforce obedience; and recommended the employment of "such a force as may take away, not only the power, but the hope of resistance." "When an Englishman is told," says he, "that the Americans shoot up like a hydra, he naturally considers how the hydra was destroyed." The event has shewn how much he was mistaken, though he exerted all his talents

and command of language in the cause. This pamphlet was written at the desire of the ministry, and, in some places, revised and curtailed by men in power; either critically as too ludicrous, or politically as too exasperating. It is characterised by the same luxuriance of imagination and energy of language, and contains the same positive assertions, sarcastical severity, extravagant ridicule, and arbitrary principles, with his former political pieces, and the most virulent and unmerited abuse of the Americans.

He now retired from the lists as a political writer, which drew upon him numerous attacks, and provoked many severe aspersions. However confident of the rectitude of his own opinions, and hardened against the common weapons of literary warfare, he must have felt sincere uneasiness, that his conduct should be imputed, erroneously, by good men, to the obligation which his pension implied, and pointedly arraigned, by respectable writers, as inconsistent with the moderation and wis-

dom of the Christian philosopher, and injurious to the influence of his moral writings.

These pamphlets, written in support of the measures of administration, from whatever motive, were published on his own account, and collected, this year, by himself, into a volume, under the title of *Political Tracts, by the Author of the Rambler*, 8vo. Coming from his pen, they will always be distinguished, among compositions of this kind, by the powerful combination of eloquence and ingenuity, with dignity and felicity of expression, though they did not support the cause for which they were undertaken.

Among the efforts of his pen, this year, may be reckoned, *Proposals for publishing the Works of Charlotte Lennox*, in 3 vols. 4to, and the *Preface* to Mr Baretti's "Easy Lesons in Italian and English."

In the month of March, this year, he was gratified by the degree of Doctor of Laws, by *diploma*, conferred on him by the University of Oxford, at the solicitation of Lord

North, the Chancellor, accompanied with the highest praise of his writings and genius.

"Sciatis, virum illustrem, SAMUELEM JOHNSON, in omni humaniorum literarum genere eruditum, omniumque scientiarum comprehensione felicissimum, scriptis suis, ad popularium mores formandos, summa verborum elegantia, ac sententiarum gravitate compositis; ita olim inclaruisse, ut dignus videretur cui ab Academia sua eximia quædam laudis prœmia deferentur, quique venerabilem Magistrorum Ordinem summa cum dignitate co-optaretur. Cum vero eundem clarissimum virum tot postea tantique labores, in patria, præsertim lingua ornanda, et stabilienda feliciter impensi, ita insigniverint, ut in Literarum Republica PRINCEPS, jam et PRIMARIUS jure habeatur; Nos Cancellarius, &c.

In the September of this year, he accompanied Mr and Mrs Thrale, and Mr Baretti, in an excursion to Paris, the only time that he ever visited the continent, and returned to England in about two months after he quitted it. He delighted in the very act of travelling;

so that he complained of no inconvenience, and despised no accommodations on the journey. The change of climate was so salutary, that he told Mr Levett, he had not been on the other side of the channel five days, before he found a sensible improvement in his health. He observed, to the companion of his journey to the Western Islands, "France is worse than Scotland in every thing but climate. Nature has done more for the French, but they have done less for themselves than the Scotch have done." * His dislike of the French he did not conceal; but he applauded the number of their books, and the grace of their style. "They have few sentiments," said he, "but they express them neatly; they have little meat too, but they dress it well." Mr Foote, who happened to be in Paris at the same time, said, that the French were perfectly astonished at his figure, and manner, and dress; for to the settled form of the last, he continued as obstinately attached in Paris as

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. ii. p. 412.

in London. According to Sir John Hawkins, however, he yielded, in this respect, to the remonstrances of his friends, so far as to dress in a suit of black clothes and a Bourgeois wig, but resisted their importunity to wear ruffles.* He understood French perfectly, but could not speak it readily, and generally spoke Latin with great elegance during the whole journey. "I tried but little," he said, "but I spoke sometimes. If I heard better, I suppose I should learn faster." In a conversation with Freron, the journalist, he thus characterised Voltaire, "*vir est acerrimi ingenii et paucarum literarum.*" Of the occurrences of this tour he kept a journal, of which a fragment has been preserved, from the 10th of October to the 4th of November,† in all probability with a design of writing an augmented account of it. The world has to regret, that from want of leisure or inclination he never perfected it.

* By a note in his diary, it appears, that he laid out near thirty pounds in clothes for this journey.

† See Boswell's Life, &c. vol. ii, p. 397—411.

His success in blending his remarks with the rapidity and elegance of his narrative, in *The Journey to the Western Islands*, inclines us to wish, as he did with regard to *Gray*, "that to travel, and to tell his travels, had been more his employment." *

In 1776, he wrote nothing for the public. At the desire of Lord Hailes, he revised his "Annals of Scotland," which he commended highly. "His accuracy," said he, "strikes me with wonder. While I was in France, I looked very often into Henault; but Lord Hailes, in my opinion, leaves him far and far behind. I never before read Scotch history with certainty." †

* *Life of Gray.*

† Boswell's Life, vol. ii, p. 42. The learned and accurate annalist died Nov. 29, 1792, in the 66th year of his age. It is to be regretted, that no endeavours have been made to render his pre-eminent talents and virtues a theme of instruction to mankind, by a suitable biographical commemoration, for which there are ample materials in the possession of his family. An affectionate tribute was paid to his memory, in a sermon preached soon after his death in the church of Inveresk, by his learned friend and venerable pastor, Dr Carlyle,

This year, he removed from Johnson's-court to a larger house in Bolt-court, Fleet-street, where he commenced an intimacy with the landlord, Mr Allen, the printer, a very worthy and sensible man. Behind it was a garden which he took delight in watering. A room on the ground-floor was assigned to Miss Williams; and the whole of the two pair of stairs-floor was made a repository for his books, consisting of about five thousand volumes. One of the rooms on this floor was his study. Here, in the intervals of his residence at Streatham, he sat every morning, receiving visits,

and printed in 1793. Prompted by veneration for his exemplary piety and integrity, and gratitude for his eminent services to literature and religion, the present writer drew up "An Account of his Life and Writings," for insertion in the "Edinburgh Magazine" for March 1793, proportioned to the means of information, but inadequate to the distinction which his qualifications deserve in the records of literary biography. A descriptive catalogue of the works, of which he was the author or editor, was drawn up by Dr Charles Stuart, for insertion in the same miscellany, for June 1793, amounting to *thirty-four* articles, exclusive of his contributions to periodical publications.

and hearing the topics of the day, and indolently trifling away the time; and to the most intimate of his friends, Mr Langton, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Bishop Percy, Mr Murphy, Dr Burney, Mr Hoole, Mr Baretti, Mr Boswell, Mr Davies, &c. sometimes gave not inelegant dinners. Chemistry continued to afford some amusement. In Gough square, and in Johnson's-court, he had an apparatus for that purpose; and the same, with perhaps some additions, was now fitted up in Bolt-court. He had also a sort of laboratory at Streatham, and diverted himself with drawing essences and colouring liquors for Mrs Thrale. But, on Mr Thrale finding him one day performing some experiments before the children and servants, in great danger of his short sight being his destruction, by bringing him close to a fierce and violent flame, he insisted that he should proceed no farther in search of the philosopher's stone. "It was a perpetual miracle," Mrs Piozzi says, "that he did not set himself on fire reading in bed, as was his constant custom, when exceedingly unable to keep clear

of mischief with our best help; and accordingly the fore-top of all his wigs were burned by the candle down to the very net-work." † Nor were the manual arts overlooked in furnishing his apartments. He supplied himself with the tools of a carpenter, and was particularly pleased in executing for himself any necessary joiner's work. *

His benevolence to the unfortunate was, at all periods of his life, very remarkable. In his house in Bolt-court, an apartment was appropriated to Mrs Desmoulins, daughter of his god-father, Dr Swinfen, and widow of Mr Desmoulins, a writing-master, and her daughter, and a Miss Carmichael. Such was his humanity, and such his generosity, that he allowed Mrs Desmoulins half-a-guinea a-week, which was above a twelfth part of his pension.

"It seems," says Mrs Piozzi, "at once vexatious and comical, to reflect, that the dis-

* Anecdotes, &c. p. 237.

† *Idler*, No. 31.

sensions those people chose to live in, distressed and mortified him exceedingly. He really was oftentimes afraid of going home, because he was sure to be met at the door with numberless complaints; and he used frequently to lament pathetically to me, and to Mr Sastres, the Italian master, who was much his favourite, that they made his life miserable, from the impossibility he found of making theirs happy; when every favour he bestowed on one was wormwood to the rest. If, however, I ventured to blame their ingratitude, and condemn their conduct, he would instantly set about softening the one, and justifying the other; and finished commonly by telling me, that I knew not to make allowances for situations I never experienced:

> To thee no reason, who know'st only good,
> But evil hast not try'd." *

In the spring of this year, he contemplated the prospect of an expedition to Italy with Mr and Mrs Thrale, and Mr Baretti, at no

* Anecdotes, &c. p. 214.

great distance, with the enthusiasm of classical curiosity and learned adventure. He had a great desire to see that interesting country, and a longing wish to leave some Latin verses at the Grand Chartreux. While the preparations were going forward, he invited Mr Boswell to accompany him, before leaving England, in an excursion to Oxford, Birmingham, Lichfield, and Ashbourne; and his fellow-traveller repaid the invitation, by recording a large portion of the learned and lively conversation between him and his friends, and commemorating the grateful testimonies of affection and veneration which he experienced in every place.

At Lichfield, his birth-place, he received the homage of his fellow-citizens, and the attention and respect of the ingenious and lettered inhabitants of his native city, with peculiar complacency. In their illustrious townsman, they beheld, with pride, in the figurative language of Miss Seward, one of its ornaments, "the majestic oak, which took first root in that valley, and was transplanted, while yet a sapling, now spreading wide its

ample arms in the forests of literature."* Among the "Lichfield worthies," one was found, Dr Darwin, the poet of Flora, who with-held the respect due to his great abilities and high reputation, from prejudice and resentment. "They had one or two interviews," we are told by the biographer of her early friend, "but never afterwards sought each other. Mutual and strong dislike subsisted between them."† It would seem that

* Poetical Works, &c. vol. i. p. lxxxix.

† Memoirs of the Life of Dr Darwin, &c. 8vo, 1804, p. 98. In this publication, the suspicious vehicle of undeserved censure, and inordinate praise, the ingenious memorialist accuses her early friend of a plagiarism, of considerable importance in the history of literature. She lays her claim, for the first time, to the first fifty verses in "The Botanic Garden," which, she professes, she had writtten in compliment to Dr Darwin, many years before, and which he inserted in his poem, without any acknowledgment. This statement, which infixes a stain on the memory of her friend, is contradicted by the attestation of Sir Brooke Boothby, Bart. and Mr Edgeworth of Edgeworthstown, to the real fact; which is, that Miss Seward addressed a short copy of verses to Dr Darwin, on his garden near Lichfield; that the Doctor, improving upon the hint, which pleased him, wrote the verses over again, as they now stand, upon a larger scale; and,

Johnson depreciated the distinguished powers of Dr Darwin, because he did not think well of his opinions, and that Dr Darwin revenged the sarcastic contempt of the great moralist, by spurning the dictatorial authority, and disparaging the wit, humour, and colloquial eloquence of his antagonist.

desirous to extend her fame, sent them to "The Gentleman's Magazine," with her name, and afterwards reclaimed, and inserted them, with some alterations and additions, in the introduction to the "Botanic Garden." Dr Darwin, in the unreserved freedom of intimacy, showed the verses, at the time, to the gentlemen who attest the fact, and assigned the reasons here given for writing and publishing them.

It is performing an act of justice to Dr Darwin, which the ingratitude of his biographer denied him, to claim for him, on the authority of the same gentlemen, a very large proportion, amounting to entire paragraphs, of the verses, in the "Elegy on Captain Cook," and very considerable corrections and improvements in the "Monody on Major André." If such respectable testimonies could be suspected of partiality, the internal evidence, especially in the "Elegy on Captain Cook," which the author never exceeded, is sufficient to satisfy every one, who is acquainted with the splendour and mechanism of "The Botanic Garden," that these compositions owe their stately structure, and most graceful ornaments, to the poet of Flora.

On leaving Lichfield, after a short stay, he proceeded on his journey, in his friend Dr Taylor's carriage, to Ashbourne;* from whence he was summoned away to Streatham, to condole with Mr and Mrs Thrale, on the death of their only son: an event which deeply affected him. He said, "this is a total extinction to their family, as much as if they were sold into captivity. I would have gone to the extremity of the earth to save this boy." †

* Dr Taylor was the son of an attorney at Ashbourne, and bred to the same profession. On quitting it, and taking orders, he got a living from the Duke of Devonshire, when Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, which he exchanged for a prebendary of Westminster. He obtained also the rectory of Market-Bosworth, but resided at Ashbourne, where he had an estate of L.1500 a-year. He repaired the family house, improved and embellished his grounds, and Johnson said, "had the largest Bull in the county." He was an active magistrate; and, though the school-fellow and friend of Johnson, a zealous whig, and employed his political interest to support the Devonshire family. He left his estate, at his death, in 1790, to Mr Webster, the son of a poor relation, whom he educated.

† Boswell's Life, &c. vol. ii, p. 482.

He left Ashbourne on the 27th of March, and arrived in London, after an absence of ten days, on the 29th, and hastened to Mr Thrale's, in the Borough, to console his afflicted friends, who were most anxious for his return. It was now resolved, that the intended journey to Italy should not take place this year. Johnson had so warmly cherished the hope of enjoying classical scenes, that he could not easily part with the scheme; but he acquiesced in their reasons for not going abroad, with a philosophical calmness. When Mr Boswell observed, that "their loss was an additional reason for their going to Italy," he said, "I rather believe not, Sir; while grief is fresh, every attempt to divert only irritates. You must wait till grief be *digested*, and then amusement will dissipate the remains of it."

In the month of April, he accompanied Mr and Mrs Thrale to Bath; from whence he made a short excursion with Mr Boswell to Bristol, "to enquire, upon the spot," into

the authenticity of the poetry published by Chatterton, "the boy of Bristol," under the name of Rowley, a supposed priest of the fifteenth century. Mr Catcott the pewterer, and Mr Barret the surgeon, the deluded instruments of introducing into the world "Rowley's poetry," showed Johnson some of Chatterton's fabricated verses, and conducted him to the tower of St Mary Redcliffe church, to "view, with his own eyes," the ancient chest in which the pretended treasure was found. From a careful inspection of the originals, as they were called, and a consideration of the suspicious circumstances which attended the discovery, the sagacious detecter of the imposition of Macpherson, without hesitation, pronounced them forgeries. "This," said he, "is the most extraordinary young man that has encountered my knowledge. It is wonderful how the whelp has written such things." *

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iii. p. 48.

The process which the counterfeit Rowley observed in his fabrications cannot now be known;* but it is probable he sketched the outlines in modern English, and then altered the spelling, and looked into his glossary for old words of the same meaning, and of so many syllables as would suit the metre. The old words, thickly laid on, form an antique crust on the language; which, on examination, appears not originally to belong to it. It was put on the better to cover the imposition; but, like most impositions, it is overloaded with disguise, and discovers itself by the very means which were designed to hide it. The fabrications had not long been made public before their authenticity underwent a severe scrutiny. Several able critics, conversant in old English literature, penetrated the disguise,

* In a fit of despair, at his lodgings in Brooke-street, Upper Holborn, Chatterton swallowed arsenic in water, on the 24th of August 1778, and died in consequence thereof the next day, at the age of *seventeen years* and *nine months*. His death was preceded by extreme indigence.

and convicted them of being spurious, by arguments, liable to no deception, drawn from principles of taste, analogical experiments, a familiarity with ancient poetry, and the gradations of composition. Johnson smiled at the grave delusion and blind prejudice of the believers in the daring imposture. "I think," said he, "this wild adherence to Chatterton more unaccountable than the obstinate defence of Ossian. In Ossian, there is a national pride, which may be forgiven, though it cannot be applauded. In Chatterton, there is nothing but the resolution to say again what had been said before.* The controversy which the forgeries of Chatterton excited is now brought to an issue. The advocates of the supposed Rowley are silent; and the generality of the learned, since they were put in the plain track of inquiry, have acquiesced in the decision of those who support the title of Chatterton. †

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iv. p. 148.

† The publications of Mr Tyrwhitt, (Appendix to "Rowley's Poems," 1771, and "Vindication" of the

About the end of the year, Dr Blair, who had been long admired as a preacher at Edinburgh, now thought of increasing his reputation, by publishing a collection of his sermons. He transmitted the manuscript to Mr Strahan, the printer, who, after keeping it for some time, wrote a letter to him discouraging the publication. Mr Strahan, however, had sent one of the sermons to Johnson for his opinion; and after his unfavourable letter to Dr Blair had been sent off, he received from Johnson a note, in which was the following paragraph.

Appendix, 1782); Mr Warton, ("History of English Poetry," vol. ii. and "Inquiry," &c. 1782); and Mr Malone, ("Cursory Observations," &c. 1782), have deservedly been considered as the first, in point of consequence, on this side of the question, and indeed decisive of the controversy. The publications of Dr Milles, ("Commentary," &c. 1782); Mr Bryant, ("Observations," &c. 1782), and Mr Matthias, ("Essay on the Evidence," &c. 1783), have been justly considered as the first, in point of learning and ingenuity, on the other side. See the Life of Chatterton; "Works of the British Poets," vol. xi. p. 297—323.

"I have read over Dr Blair's first sermon with more than approbation: to say it is good is to say too little." *

Mr Strahan then very candidly wrote again to Dr Blair, inclosing Johnson's note, and agreeing to purchase the sermons, of which the extensive circulation is unprecedented in the history of that species of literature in Europe. "Dr Blair's sermons," he said to Mr Boswell, "are now universally commended; but let him think, that I had the honour of first finding, and first praising, his excellencies. I did not stay to add my voice to that of the public" †

In the year 1777, the miserable fate of the Rev. Dr Dodd, condemned to death for forgery, strongly excited Johnson's compassion, and called forth the strenuous exertions of his humanity. The unhappy man had been deservedly very popular as a preacher, had written many useful tracts of piety, and had been

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iii. p. 100.

† Ibid. p. 227.

peculiarly active in the support of public charities. Utterly void of all economy in his habits of expence, and latterly dreadfully licentious in his morals, he was induced, in order to support his credit, and to prevent the disclosure of his circumstances, to forge a bond from the Earl of Chesterfield, to whom he had been tutor, for L.4200. He flattered himself that his noble pupil would have generously paid the amount of the bond, in case of the forgery being detected, before he might be able to repay it; but he had the mortification to find that he was mistaken. The fraud being soon discovered, and corroborated by his own confession, and refunding the money, the persons who held the bond wished to save him from his cruel fate; but the noble person who might have saved him was inexorable. He was tried for his life, at the Old Bailey, Feb. 24. Lord Chesterfield appeared against him, and he was capitally convicted. Johnson thought his sentence just; yet, perhaps, fearing that religion m ght suffer from the errors of one of its ministers, he endeavour

ed to prevent the last ignominious spectacle. To the credit of humanity be it recorded, that there was a very general desire that his life should be spared. In his distress, he implored, by the intervention of the Countess of Harrington, the assistance of Johnson, who did all he could to save him. He wrote for him his *Speech to the Recorder of London,* at the Old Bailey, when the sentence of death was about to be pronounced upon him; *The Convict's Address to his unhappy Brethren;* a sermon delivered in the chapel of Newgate; three *letters,* one to Lord Chancellor Bathurst, one to Lord Mansfield, and one to Mr Jenkinson, afterwards Earl of Liverpoool; *A Petition from Dr Dodd to the King; A Petition from Mrs Dodd to the Queen; Observations,* inserted in the newspapers, on a petition for mercy to Dr Dodd, signed by 23,000 names; *A Petition from the City of London;* and Dr Dodd's *Last Solemn Declaration,* which he left with the Sheriff at the place of execution.

The intercessions for his pardon, which have no example, either for number or respectability, failed of success, in spite of many circumstances of extenuation; and he prepared himself for death in a manner truly worthy of a Christian. On June 25th, two days before his execution, in the warmth of his gratitude, he wrote the following valedictory note to his "comforter, advocate, and *friend*."

"Accept, thou *great* and *good* heart, my earnest and fervent thanks, and prayer, for all thy benevolent and kind efforts in my behalf. Oh, Dr Johnson! as I sought your knowledge at an early hour in life, would to Heaven I had cultivated the love and acquaintance of so excellent a man! I pray God most sincerely, to bless you with the highest transports—the infelt satisfaction of *humane* and benevolent exertions: And admitted, as I trust I shall be, to the realms of bliss, before you, I shall hail *your* arrival there with transports, and rejoice to acknowledge that you was my comforter, my advocate, and my *friend*. God *be ever* with *you*."

To this affecting farewel address Johnson replied, the next day, in the following consolatory and impressive note.

"That which is appointed to all men is now coming upon you. Outward circumstances, the eyes, and the thoughts of men, are below the notice of an immortal being, about to stand the trial for eternity before the Supreme Judge of heaven and earth. Be comforted; your crime, morally or religiously *considered*, has no very deep dye of turpitude: it corrupted no man's principles; it attacked no man's life: it involved only a temporary and reparable injury. Of this, and of all other sins, you are earnestly to repent; and may God, who knoweth our frailty, and desireth not our death, accept your repentance, for the sake of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

"In requittal of those well-intended offices, which you are pleased so emphatically to acknowledge, let me beg that you make in your devotions one petition for my eternal welfare."

The exertions of Johnson in behalf of that unfortunate divine, though unavailing, strongly indicate the goodness of his heart; and the reflections which close his melancholy story, afford a solemn warning, and an instructive lesson to mankind.

"Such were the last thoughts of a man whom we have seen exulting in popularity, and sunk in shame. For his reputation, which no man can give to himself, those who conferred it are to answer. Of his public ministry, the means of judging were sufficiently attainable. He must be allowed to preach well whose sermons strike his audience with forcible conviction. Of his life, those who thought it consistent with his doctrine, did not originally form false notions. He was at first what he endeavoured to make others; but the world broke down his resolution, and he in time ceased to exemplify his own instructions.

"Let those who are tempted to his faults tremble at his punishment; and those whom he impressed from the pulpit with religious

sentiments, endeavour to confirm them, by considering the regret and self-abhorrence with which he viewed his deviation from rectitude." *

About this time, the humanity of Johnson, obedient to every call, was effectually exerted in contributing a *Prologue* to Kelly's comedy of "A Word to the Wise," acted, for one night, at Covent-Garden theatre, by the generous permission of the proprietor, for the benefit of the author's widow and children. The play had been brought upon the stage in 1770, and damned, on the first night, by a party assembled to obstruct the representation.

* He was executed, June 27th, 1777, in the 48th year of his age. The unusual distance between the pronouncing and the executing of his sentence, was owing to a doubt respecting the admissibility of an evidence, whose testimony had been made use of to convict him, which was removed by the unanimous opinion of the Judges. An accurate list of his theological and miscellaneous writings, consisting of *fifty-five* articles, is prefixed to his "Thoughts in Prison," 8vo, 1780: a work, the horror of the place, and the anguish of his mind considered, of uncommon merit.

The persuasive energy of the introductory lines of the *Prologue*, could not fail to soothe the violence of party rage, and conciliate the liberal pity of the audience.

> "This night presents a play, which public rage,
> Or right or wrong, once hooted from the stage:
> From zeal or malice now no more we dread,
> For English vengeance wars not with the dead.
> A generous foe regards with pitying eye
> The man whom fate has laid where all must lie:
> To wit, reviving from its author's dust,
> Be kind, ye judges, or at least be just:
> Let no renew'd hostilities invade
> The oblivious grave's inviolable shade:
> Let one great payment every claim appease,
> And him who cannot hurt, allow to please."

Mrs Piozzi relates, that when Johnson was rallied by Mr Murphy for these exertions of his humanity, so close to one another, his answer was, "Why, Sir, when they come to me with a dying Parson and a dead Stay-maker, what can a man do?" *

* Mr Hugh Kelly was born in Ireland 1739, and bred to the business of a stay-maker, which he quitted for the

This year, came out "The Posthumous Works" of Bishop Pearce, edited by the Rev. Mr Derby, in 2 vols. 4to, which afforded Johnson an opportunity of shewing his gratitude to that excellent prelate for his assistance in the compilation of the *English Dictionary*,* by contributing some *additions* to the "Account of his Life and Character, written by himself," and a *Dedication to the King*, of "the last labours of a learned Bishop, who died in the toils and duties of his calling."

In the summer, at the solicitation of the London booksellers, Johnson entered into an engagement, as he expresses it, "to write little Lives and little Prefaces, to a little edition of the English Poets," † undertaken by that body of men, in opposition to a small edi-

profession of the law, and the employment of a political and miscellaneous writer. He was the conductor of "The Public Ledger," and author of "The Babler," 1767, "Thespis," "Louisa Mildmay," and seven plays. He died Feb. 3, 1777, leaving a wife and five children unprovided.

* See note, p. 227.

† Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iii. p. 115.

tion of the Poets, printed by Mr Gilbert Martin * at the Apollo Press in Edinburgh, to be sold by Mr Bell in London.

The booksellers, according to Mr Dilly's account of the origin of this memorable undertaking, alarmed at the invasion of what they called their literary property, agreed, at a meeting of the most respectable proprietors of copyright, "to print an elegant and accurate edition of all the English poets of reputation, from Chaucer to the present time;" and in order to "stamp the reputation of it superior to any thing that had appeared before." †

* This eccentric man was a native of the town of Moffat, and, for some time, a partner with Mr Wotherspoon, his fellow-apprentice. His printing-house, in Pleasance-street, called the Apollo Press, embellished with inscriptions from Shakespeare, was destroyed by fire in 1778. He was unfortunate in his projects, and died in poverty.

† The first uniform edition of the English Poets which appeared in our nation, in the manner of the editions of the poets of France and Italy, was formed by Dr Blair, and printed at Edinburgh in 42 vols. 12mo, 1773, for Messrs. Creech and Balfour, booksellers, containing the works of Milton, Cowley, Butler, Dryden, Waller, Garth,

Messrs. Davies, Cadell, and Strahan, were deputed to wait upon Johnson, to solicit him to

Prior, Addison, Parnell, Pope, Gay, Young, Thomson, Shenstone, Gray, and Lyttelton. In this edition, many pieces of Cowley, Parnell, Swift, and Shenstone, were omitted in the collection of their respective works.

In 1776, a collection of English poetry, upon a more extensive plan, was undertaken by Mr Bell, bookseller in London, and printed by Martin in Edinburgh, in 109 miniature volumes, containing the entire works of the poets, admitted into Dr Blair's edition, and the works of Chaucer, Spenser, Donne, Denham, Roscommon, Buckingham, Lansdowne, King, Pomfret, Congreve, Rowe, Watts, J. Philips, Smith, Hughes, Fenton, Tickell, Somerville, Broome, Savage, Pitt, A. Philips, Dyer, G. West, Hammond, Collins, Moore, Armstrong, R. West, Mallet, Cunningham, and Churchill. The works of the several poets, in this collection, were published separately, and at long intervals; some of the later volumes being printed in London in 1787.

In 1779, while Mr Bell's edition was going forward, the London booksellers published a collection of "The Works of the English Poets, with Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, by Samuel Johnson," in 60 vols. small 8vo. This collection was limited to a list of *fifty-two* poets, beginning with Cowley and ending with Lyttelton; all of whom appear in Mr Bell's edition, except Rochester, Otway, Dorset, Stepney, Walsh, Duke, Sprat, Halifax, and Blackmore. In 1790, a new edition of this collection was published in 75 vols. 8vo, in which the proprietors introduced the works of Moore, Cawthorne, Churchill,

furnish a concise account of the life of each poet, whose works might be introduced into the col-

Lloyd, Falconer, Cunningham, Green, Goldsmith, P. Whitehead, Armstrong, Langhorne, Johnson, W. Whitehead, and Jenyns, with short biographical prefaces, in the manner of the French *Notices Litteraires*, by Mr Isaac Reed, of Staples-Inn.

The defective list of poets to which this edition was limited, induced the present writer to suggest to Mr James Mundell, printer in Edinburgh, an edition of English poetry, which might unite the ancient and modern poets in one comprehensive view, and exhibit the progress of our national poetry, corresponding with the gradual refinement of language and of manners, from the rudeness and simplicity of a remote period, to the polish and elegance of modern times. The selection of the works of the older poets, which he recommended for publication, comprehended the works of Chaucer, *Langland*, *Gower*, the best parts of *Lydgate*, *Barclay*, *Hawes*, the best parts of *Skelton*, Surrey, Wyat, the best parts of *Warner*, *Sydney*, Sackville, Spenser, *Marlow*, Davies, Shakespeare, Drayton, Daniel, Jonson, Donne, Hall, Drummond, *Stirling*, Browne, P. Fletcher, G. Fletcher, the best parts of *Quarles*, *King*, Carew, Suckling, Crashaw, Davenant, and the translations of *Fairfax*, *Sandys*, and *May*. (The works of Barbour, James I. Henry, the Minstrel, Dunbar, Douglas, and Lindsay, belonged to a separate edition of the Scottish Poets in contemplation.) The selection of the works of the modern poets, which he recommended for publication, comprehended the works of *Marvell*, *C. Cotton*, *Sedley*, *Hopkins*, *Oldham*, Pattison,

lection. To this proposal, from a body of men which he much esteemed, Johnson very readily consented; and as a recompence for an undertaking, as he thought, "not very extensive or difficult," he bargained for Two hundred gui-

Hill, *Eusden*, *Welsted*, *Sewell*, Blair, Hamilton, Harte, Boyse, Thompson, Cooper, Brown, Grainger, Smollett, Wilkie, Dodsley, *Mendez*, *Jenner*, *Kirkpatrick*, Smart, Chatterton, Græme, Glover, Shaw, Lovibond, Penrose, Mickle, Jago, Scott, Logan, N. Cotton, Warton, and Blacklock. Mr Mundell, with a liberal spirit of enterprise, readily adopted the plan of associating the classical poets of our nation, from Chaucer to Blacklock, in a general edition, though with the unavoidable omission of the poets, printed in italics, and published a collection of "The Works of the British Poets, with Prefaces, Biographical and Critical," furnished by the present writer, in 14 vols. 8vo. printed in double columns, 1792—1795, containing the works of *one hundred and fourteen* poets; of whom *forty-nine* were not received into Johnson's edition, and *forty-six* were, for the first time, introduced into an edition of English poetry.

The selection and arrangement of this edition have been followed and extended by an edition of the "Works of the British Poets," edited by Mr Park, in 82 vols. 12mo, 1809, and an enlarged edition of Johnson's "Works of the English Poets," edited by Mr Chalmers, in 21 vols. 8vo, printed in double columns, 1810.

neas, and was afterwards presented by the proprietors with One hundred pounds.

His original design was only to have allotted to each poet an *Advertisement*, like those which we find in the French Miscellanies, containing a few dates, and a general character, which could have conferred not much reputation upon the writer, nor have communicated much information to his readers. Happily for both, "the honest desire of giving useful pleasure," led him beyond his first intention. In executing this limited design, he enlarged his scheme, and entered more fully into the merits and defects of the poets, to whose lives the public attention was called, by the collection of their works. The range to which he was limited by his employers, from *Cowley* to *Lyttelton*, extended to but *fifty-two* lives, including, with one or two exceptions, only the modern poets. As the undertaking was occasional and unforeseen, he must be supposed to have engaged in it with less provision of materials than might have been accumulated by longer premeditation. Of

the early poets, he had recourse for the general characters to Phillip's "Theatrum Poetarum," 12mo, 1675, Winstanley's "Lives of the most famous English Poets," 8vo, 1687, Langbaine's "Account of the English Dramatic Poets," 8vo, 1691, Jacob's "Poetical Register," 2 vols 1723, and Cibber's "Lives of the Poets," &c. compiled chiefly from materials collected by Mr Coxeter,* 5 vol. 12mo, 1753; but very little had been done by his predecessors, and much more was required in this department of biography. Of the later poets, he obtained many particulars from Spence's Collections, communicated by the Duke of Newcastle; and many omissions were supplied by Mr Steevens, Mr Reed, and Mr Nichols. He might, however, by attention and inquiry, have diversified and enlivened his biography by more traditionary and contemporary information than we find. But he was not actuated by an enthusiasm for his employment. He could not encounter

* See p. 115.

weariness, perplexity, and disgust. The labour of literature was a task from which he always wished to escape.

In the selection of the poets he had no responsible concern; but *Blackmore*, *Watts*, *Pomfret*, and *Yalden*, were inserted by his recommendation; and Mr Nichols tells us, he was frequently consulted during the printing of the collection, and revised many of the sheets. The managers of the edition are answerable for the arbitrary and capricious admission of

——— "the wits of either Charles's days,
The mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease," *

and the omission of "many ancient poets, whom it were unjust to number with the *Granvilles*, *Montagues*, *Stepneys*, and *Sheffields* of their time." †

While the edition of the Poets was going forward, he found leisure to relieve the la-

* Pope.
† *Rambler*, No. 106.

bour of biographical research, and the intensity of critical disquisition, by participating in the relaxation of the literary and fashionable societies of the metropolis, and making short excursions to Oxford, Lichfield, and Ashbourne.

It will be recollected, among his observable particularities, that he delighted much in the society of ladies, who were as highly respectable as they were highly accomplished; and, notwithstanding the natural roughness of his manner, so often mentioned, made himself highly agreeable to them. When the grave author of the *Rambler* was preparing lessons of moral instruction for the world, he spent much time in the company of the Miss Cotterells, in Castle-street, attracted by the influence of sprightly conversation, and high breeding. About this time, several ladies, distinguished for rank, as well as wit and talent, had evening assemblies, in which the fair sex participated in the conversation of the most eminent literary characters of that pe-

riod, without ceremony, cards, or supper. The recluse biographer of the English Poets went occasionally to these parties, animated with a desire to please; and was received with distinguished regard in the assemblies of Mrs Vesey, the centre of pleasing and rational society, and of Mrs Montague, celebrated for her learning, taste, and benevolence. * One evening, at Mrs Vesey's, Mr Langton relates, that "as soon as Dr Johnson was come in, and had taken a chair, the company began to collect round him, till they became not less than four, if not five, deep; those behind standing and listening over the heads of those that were

* A foreigner of distinction, who was to go to one of these assemblies with an acquaintance, being told, in jest, that dress was so little necessary, that he might appear, if he pleased, in *blue stockings*, when he spoke of it in French, called it literally, *Bas Bleu;* which was the origin of the *Blue Stocking Club*, since given to these meetings. In a poem, entitled "The Bas Bleu," written by Miss Hannah More, in allusion to this ludicrous mistake of the foreigner, she has characterised the most distinguished members of the *Blue Stocking Club* with much spirit and elegance.

sitting near him." * In these meetings, when the stern critic condescended to compliment any one, he did it, we are told, with more dignity to himself, and more effect upon the company, than any man. On one occasion, "when Sir Joshua Reynolds left the room, he said, 'There goes a man not to be spoiled by prosperity.' And when Mrs Montague shewed him some China plates which had once belonged to Queen Elizabeth, he told her, that they had no reason to be ashamed of their present possessor, who was so little inferior to the first." †

In the year 1778, while he was engaged in his poetical biography, he participated, with great satisfaction, in the gratulations which

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iii, p. 456.

† Mrs Piozzi's Anecdotes, p. 204.

Mrs Elizabeth Montague is distinguished as an author by "Three Dialogues of the Dead," published along with Lord Lyttelton's "Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare," and "Posthumous Letters." Being left by her husband in the possession of his noble fortune, she lived in a style of the most splendid hospitality. She died, at an advanced age, 25th August, 1800.

attended the publication of the first volume of the "Academical Discourses" of Sir Joshua Reynolds, whom he regarded as a favourite pupil of his own school. To his acquaintance with Johnson, indeed, he candidly ascribed much of that originality and power of thinking, so vividly displayed in his writings. Among the fragments of a Discourse on his own progress, studies, and practice in the art, is the following acknowledgment of this debt of gratitude.

"Whatever merit these Discourses have, must be imputed, in a great measure, to the education which I may be said to have had under Dr Johnson. I do not mean to say, though it certainly would be to the credit of these Discourses if I could say it with truth, that he contributed even a single sentiment to them; but he qualified my mind to think justly. No man had like him the faculty of teaching inferior minds the art of thinking. Perhaps other men might have equal knowledge, but few were so communicative. His great

pleasure was to talk to those who looked up to him. It was here he exhibited his wonderful powers. In mixed company, and frequently in company that *ought* to have looked up to him, many, thinking they had a character for learning to support, considered it as beneath them to enlist in the train of his auditors; and to such persons he certainly did not appear to advantage, being often impetuous and overbearing. The desire of shining in conversation was in him, indeed, a predominant passion; and if it must be attributed to vanity, let it, at the same time, be recollected, that it produced that loquaciousness from which his more intimate friends derived considerable advantage. The observations which he made on poetry, on life, and on every thing about us, I applied to our art—with what success others may judge." *

* Malone's Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds, prefixed to the collected edition of his "Works," 3 vols. 8vo. vol. i. p. 28—9.

In the summer of this year, he accepted an invitation from Mr Langton to visit the camp at Warley, where his friend was at the time stationed as a captain of the Lincolnshire militia, and staid about a week; contemplating a scene, amusing by its novelty, and interesting, as it gratified a disposition which he constantly manifested, of inquiring into subjects of a military kind. He was accommodated, during his stay, with a tent, in which he slept, by an officer of the Lincolnshire regiment, and entertained by General Hall, with a courtesy that was very acceptable to him. He engaged in discourse with the officers on military topics eagerly; observed the proceedings of a regimental court-martial patiently, and watched the practices of the soldiers, in their exercise, attentively. On one occasion, in walking among the tents, and observing the difference between those of the officers and private men, he said, "that the superiority of accommodation of the better conditions of life to that of the inferior ones, was never exhibited to him in so distinct a

view;" * an observation strongly characteristic of the propensity of his mind to moralization, on common occasions.

In the year 1779, in the midst of his most interesting labours, he was tenderly affected by a fresh instance of the uncertainty of life; the death of his beloved pupil, and delightful companion, Garrick, on the 20th of January, in the 63d year of his age. The departure of this extraordinary man, for upwards of thirty years the arbiter of dramatic taste, and the idol of the public, was followed by unprecedented honours, and the tears of a whole nation. In the theatrical character, he was certainly the greatest man of his time; and, in his own character, he was highly respectable. The universality of his dramatic talents has no example in the history of the stage; and no gifted actor, since his time, has expressed, with equal force, the effusions of comic gaiety and tragic terror. In private life, he was not less fascinating than upon the stage. He

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iii. p. 286.

gave the highest spirit to sensible society, and the highest delight to the convivial board. In the moment of recent grief, which was poignant, even to excess, the grateful remembrance of the early patronage of Mr Walmsley* drew from Johnson the following emphatic eulogy on his deceased friend.

"At this man's table, I enjoyed many cheerful and instructive hours, with companions, such as are not often found, with one who has lengthened, and one who has gladdened life;—with Dr James, whose skill in physic will be long remembered; with DAVID GARRICK, whom I hoped to have gratified with this character of our common friend. But what are the hopes of man! I am disappointed by the stroke of death, which has eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure." †

In conversation with Mrs Siddons, Johnson said, "Garrick was the only actor I ever

* See p. 36.

† *Life of Smith.*

saw whom I could admire both in tragedy and comedy;" and concluded with this compliment to his social talents; "and after all, I thought him less to be envied on the stage than at the head of a table." * When Garrick was accused of avarice, he said, "I know that Garrick has given away more money than any man in England, that I am acquainted with; and that not from ostentatious views." † In conversation with Sir William Jones, he said, "Garrick and his profession have been equally indebted to each other. His profession made him rich, and he made his profession respectable." ‡

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iv. p. 253.

† Ibid, vol. iii. p. 72.

‡ Sir William Forbes's Life of Dr Beattie, vol. ii. 4to edition, p. 410.

With this elegant and interesting work before him, the present writer will be pardoned for reflecting on the kindness which prompted the excellent author to place it in his library, as a pledge of friendship, with his dying hand. The death of this amiable and accomplished man, the distinguished friend of Johnson, Percy, Reynolds, Garrick, and Beattie, happened on the 10th November, 1806, in the 68th year of his age, soon after

The different fortunes of Johnson and Garrick in the world, from their first setting out together, afford an occasion for reflection. Garrick, abandoning the study of the law, his original destination, started at once into celebrity, on the stage, and speedily amassed a large fortune, † by the exercise of a profession which Johnson always affected to view with some contempt. Johnson, following the avocation of an author by profession, rose to the first station in literature, but was condemned to write for daily bread, during the greatest part of his life, and became indebted, even at last, for a very moderate competence, to the bounty of his sovereign.

the publication of the affectionate biography of his early friend. His exemplary public and private virtues, so beneficial to his country, and so endearing to his friends, afford a theme of commemoration and instruction, far exceeding the bounds of this incidental tribute of affection and gratitude.

† He died worth L.140,000. Mr Davies, in his "Life of Garrick," of which Johnson wrote the first sentence, has mentioned a variety of particulars that do honour to his memory; and recorded, among others, several instances of his liberality to his friends.

At length, in the course of this year, after many intervals of relaxation, his perseverance enabled him to give to the world the means of much instruction and pleasure, by the publication of the first portion of his *Lives of the English Poets*, under the title of *Biographical and Critical Prefaces*, in 5 vols. 12mo. Of this specimen of his poetical biography, including some of the greatest names in English literature, the circulation was so rapid, and the reception so flattering, that he was immediately pronounced, by universal suffrage, the first biographer and critic of the nation.

In the year 1780, while he was engaged in preparing the remainder of his *Lives of the Poets*, for which the world was in impatience, he felt heavily another instance of the sad privations which death makes among the friends of those who are destined to long life. In April this year, he was deprived of his gay and fascinating companion, Mr Beauclerk. In communicating the event to Mr Boswell, he exclaimed, "Poor dear Beauclerk! *nec ut soles dabis joca.* His wit and his folly, his acute-

ness and maliciousness, his merriment and reasoning, are now over! Such another will not often be found among mankind." * At Mr Thrale's, soon after, when the company were talking of Mr Beauclerk's death, he took occasion to extol his endowments, and praise the wonderful facility with which he uttered what was highly excellent, and said, "That Beauclerk's talents were those which he felt himself more disposed to envy than those of any whom he had known." At Mrs Vesey's one evening, when Lord Althorpe, one of the company, addressed him, on the same subject, saying, "Our CLUB has had a great loss since we met last;" he replied, "A loss that perhaps the whole nation could not repair." †

A new parliament being called, this year, the representation of the borough of Southwark was again contested; and his friend Thrale had the mortification to lose his election, in consequence of his health being so

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iii. p. 449.

† Ibid. p. 455. Mr Beauclerk's library was sold by public auction in April and May, 1781, for L.5011.

much disordered as to deprive him of the benefit of personal exertion. On this occasion, Johnson kindly lent his assistance in writing *Advertisements* and *Letters* for him, with his usual felicity of expression; and, at the close of the contest, accompanied him to Brighthelmstone, and tried every prudent artifice of amusement, and every pious argument of consolation, for the restoration of his health and peace of mind.

This year, Dr Francklin, the object of Mr Murphy's satirical vengeance,* gave a public testimony of his "admiration of the respectable talents" of the English moralist, beyond all suspicion of partiality, by a dedication of the *Demonax*, in his translation of Lucian, "To Dr Samuel Johnson, the Demonax of the present age;" a just and appropriate compliment, corresponding with the general character given by Lucian of the ancient sage, "the best philosopher whom I have ever seen

* See page 276.

or known," * of which he could not be insensible.

In 1781, after many intervals of relaxation, Johnson at last gave to the world the remaining portion of his *Biographical and Critical Prefaces*, in 5 vols. 12mo. "Some time in March," he says, in a memorandum of that year, "I finished the *Lives of the Poets*, which I wrote in my usual way, dilatorily and hastily, unwilling to work, and working with vigour and haste." * In a memorandum previous to this, he says of them, "Written, I hope, in such a manner as may tend to the promotion of piety." ‡

In one instance, in the new series of *Lives*, the assistance he received extended to an entire article, the *Life of Young*, written at his request by the Rev. Sir Herbert Croft, Bart. then a Barrister-at-law, and possessing, in a considerable degree, the vivacity of style, and faci-

* "ἀρίστον ὧν οἶδα ἐγὼ φιλοσόφων γενόμενον."

† *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 190.

‡ *Ibid*, p. 174.

lity of moral reflection, which distinguish the *Biographical Prefaces* of his "great master."

This was the last of Johnson's literary labours; and though completed when he was in his seventy-second year, shows that his faculties were in as vigorous a state as ever. His judgment and his taste, his quickness in the discrimination of motives, and facility of moral reflection, shine as strongly in these narratives as in any of his more early performances; and his style, if not so energetic, is at least more level to the taste of the generality of critical objectors.

The *Lives of the English Poets*, comprehending the poetical biography of a whole century, formed a memorable era in the life of Johnson; and have contributed to immortalize his name, and secured him that rational esteem which party or partiality could not procure, and which even the defects of the work have not been able to lessen.

The inveteracy of his political prejudices, and resolute adherence to certain early preconceived opinions of the excellence of poetry,

unfortunately influenced his great mind in forming a degrading estimate of our most exalted poets. But his *Lives*, notwithstanding this unconquerable bias, will always be held in high estimation, for the vigour of expression, the sagacity of criticism, and the knowledge of life which they display, and the pure morality which they inculcate. It is certain that no one reader will universally subscribe to his critical decisions; but all may admire his vast intuitive knowledge, and power of reasoning, and venerate his inflexible sincerity, and noble intrepidity in declaring his opinions, unbiassed by the partialities of friendship, the sanction of names, or the influence of prescriptive authority.

Among the *Lives* of the early poets, of which the execution is most elaborate and satisfactory, his abhorrence of the politics of Milton has led him to speak of the "acrimonious and surly republican," in terms of harsh and unjustifiable severity. This may be granted to the whig-accusers of our great poetical biographer, without admitting the va-

lidity of the charges brought against him by Archdeacon Blackburne, of being an accomplice in the forgeries of Lauder, of undervaluing Milton in a "poetical scale," inserted in the "Literary Magazine," and of accusing the Latin secretary of the Council of State, of interpolating a passage in the "Eikon Basilike," and censuring Charles I. for the interpolation. *

"On my shewing Dr Johnson," says Mr Nichols, "Archdeacon Blackburne's 'Remarks

* Milton, in his "Eikonoclastes," (1649) arraigned his Majesty for having adopted a prayer, attributed to a heathen princess, from Sir Philip Sidney's "Arcadia," (p. 252. 4th edit. 1613), and giving it, with other papers, as his own, to Bishop Juxon, who attended him on the scaffold. Whether Charles himself transcribed this prayer from the "Arcadia," or whether, unconscious of its origin, he received it from one of his clerical attendants, the offence, if any, seems of a very pardonable nature. The King never claimed the prayer as his own composition; and it has been proved, that the "Eikon Basilike," in which it first appeared, was compiled by Dr Gauden, from the original notes and daily memorandums found in the King's closet. "I have now in my possession," says Dr Symmons, "(Life of Milton, note, p. 229.) the first edition of the 'Eikon,' printed

on the Life of Milton,' &c. * he wrote on the margin of p. 14. "In the business of Lauder, I was deceived, partly by thinking the man too frantic to be fraudulent." "Of this quotation from the "Magazine," I was not the author. I fancy it was put in after I had quitted that work; for I not only did not write it, but do not remember it." †

The prostitution with which Milton is charged, cannot, on any ground, be supported; because he could not have seen the interpolated passage before it was printed in the "Eikon Basilike;" but the charge of prosti-

in 1649, (for B. Royston, at the Angel in Ivy Lane), to which 'The Prayer in Captivity' is attached." The present writer has in his possession, an edition of the "Reliquiæ Sacræ Carolinæ," &c. printed at the Hague, by Samuel Browne, 12mo, 1650, in which the disputed prayer is wanting in the "Eikon," though it bears to to have been printed, in a separate title page, in 1649.

* Which were extracted from his "Memoirs of Thomas Hollis, Esq." 4to, and published in 12mo, 1780. See the Life of Archdeacon Blackburne, prefixed to his Theological Works, in 7 vols 8vo. and Dr Disney's Life of T. Brand Hollis, Esq. 8vo.

† Literary Anecdotes, &c. vol. ii. p. 551.

tution is retorted on the character of Johnson, by the able and enlightened advocate of civil and religious liberty, in the harsh language of prejudice and aversion, which he justly condemned in the biographer of Milton.

"There is indeed one performance ascribed to the pen of the Doctor, where the prostitution is of so singular a nature, that it would be difficult to select an adequate motive for it out of the mountainous heap of conjectural causes of human passions or human caprice. We allude to the speech delivered by the late unhappy Dr William Dodd, when he was about to hear the sentence of the law pronounced upon him in consequence of an indictment for gery.

"The voice of the public has given the honour of manufacturing this speech to Dr Johnson; and the style and configuration of the speech itself confirm the imputation.

"Dr Dodd was a man of parts, a poet and an orator. He can hardly be supposed to have suspected, that the powers of his own rhetoric would be too feeble for so critical

an occasion. Presence of mind he would not want to compose a speech for himself. His effusions, both in prose and poetry, during the most trying moments of his confinement, prove that he did not. The naked unadorned feelings of his own mind on that awful occasion (which he could hardly convey to Dr Johnson), would have been the most expressive of his sincerity and self-humiliation; and the most proper and effectual recommendation of his case to the commiseration of his audience, and the merciful interposition of his judges.

"An ambition to go out of the world with the applause of having made a florid speech, we cannot, with any degree of charity, impute to the unfortunate criminal. He must, in that case, have had vanity sufficient to prevent him from borrowing his materials from another.

"But whatever inducement Dr Dodd might have to solicit Dr Johnson's aid on such an occasion, it is hardly possible to divine what could be Dr Johnson's motive for accept-

ing the office. A man to express the precise state of mind of another, about to be destined to an ignominious death for a capital crime, should, one would imagine, have some consciousness, that he himself had incurred some guilt of the same kind; in which case, his apprehensions would furnish him with topics of deprecation suited to the purpose of his obtaining mercy. But this, we trust, was not the case.†"

The venerable whig-defender of Milton has convicted his tory-biographer of repeating a refuted calumny against him; but in viewing the exertions of his humanity in behalf of Dr Dodd, through the medium of party-prejudice, he has, unconsciously we trust, far exceeded the bounds of suspicion, which candour and charity prescribe, in judging of the actions of our fellow-men.

As the *Lives* of the later poets brought Johnson among his contemporaries, he was accused, not without some reason, of a strong

* Remarks on Dr Johnson's Life of Milton, p. 153—56.

aversion towards the poets who were educated at the university of Cambridge, and a decided preference of the compositions of those writers who ranged themselves in the school of Pope, and maintained his own opinion of the excellence of rhyme over blank verse, in English poetry.

"Johnson's new 'Lives,' says Dr Beattie, "are published. He is very severe on my poor friend Gray. His Life of Pope is excellent; and in all his Lives there is merit, as they contain a great variety of sound criticism and pleasing information. He has not done justice to Lord Lyttelton." *

In the *Lives* of *Collins*, *Akenside*, *Hammond*, *Shenstone*, *Dyer*, *Gray*, and *Lyttelton*, the characters of the several poets were arraigned of unwarrantable harshness, and the strictures on their works suspected of erroneous criticism. †

* Sir William Forbes's Life of Dr Beattie, vol. ii. 4to edition, p. 91.

† Besides innumerable attacks which issued against him from the periodical publications of the time, Mr Potter, the translator of Eschylus, &c. published "Re-

The men of Cambridge resented the degrading estimate of *Gray;* and the unworthy treatment of *Lyttelton*, excluded him from the assemblies of Mrs Montague, the friend of that nobleman.

The petty hostilities, whether serious or merry, which issued against him from the narrow circles in which prejudice and resentment were fostered, neither disturbed his tranquillity, nor lessened his confidence in the rectitude of his own judgment. "When I talked to him," says Mr Boswell, "of the feeble, though shrill outcry which had been raised," he said, "Sir, I consider myself as entrusted with a certain portion of truth. I have given my opinion sincerely: let them shew where they think me wrong." * Yet the estrange-

marks on the Lives of the Poets," 8vo, 1781; and Mr Beville published "Observations on the Life of Hammond," 8vo, 1782. Both these publications are distinguished by taste, elegance, classical enthusiasm of sentiment, and high respect for the biographer of the English poets.

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iv. p. 66.

ment of Mrs Montague, and the exclusion from the enjoyment of the "Feast of Reason," at which that elegantly accomplished lady presided, with her highly respected friends, Miss Carter and Miss Hannah More, seem to have given him, as might be expected, some little disturbance. "Mrs Montague has dropped me," he said to Mr Boswell. "Now, Sir, there are people whom one should like very well to drop, but would not like to be dropped by." *

With the *Lives of the English Poets* Johnson closed his literary career; and, by the last exertions of his powerful mind, conferred an inestimable benefit on his country, which has not been confined to the literary world, but has been extended to the public at large. Their general circulation, in a separate form, in 4 vols. 8vo, among all ranks of the community, have excited a laudable attention to the cultivation of literary biography, and ele-

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iv. p. 76.

gant criticism; and the edition of English poetry, with which they were associated, has led the way to several editions of the works of our national poets, on an improved and more extensive scale.

From the close of his last great work, the malady that persecuted him through life, came upon him with redoubled violence. The concluding portion of his life was saddened by the rapid decline of health, the loss of old friends, and especially the contemplation of his approaching end, which was constantly before his eyes. The fabric of his constitution seemed to be tottering; and the prospect of death, he declared, was terrible. In the pauses of conversation, whoever sat near his chair might hear him repeating from Shakespeare,

"Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod, and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods."

and from Milton,

> Who would lose,
> For fear of pain, this intellectual being!

On the 4th of April, this year, he lost his valued friend Mr Thrale. He was in the house when his friend expired; and thus mentions the melancholy event:

"On Wednesday the 11th of April was buried my dear friend Mr Thrale, who died on Wednesday the 4th; and with him were buried many of my hopes and pleasures. About five, I think, on Wednesday morning, he expired. I felt almost the last flutter of his pulse, and looked for the last time upon the face, that, for fifteen years, had never been turned upon me but with respect and benignity. Farewel. May God, that delighteth in mercy, have *had* mercy on thee. I had constantly prayed for him before his death. The decease of him from whose friendship I had obtained many opportunities of amusement, and to whom I turned my thoughts as to

a refuge from misfortunes, has left me heavy. But my business is with myself." *

Mr Thrale appointed Johnson one of his executors, and left him, as he did each of his other executors, L.200. Of his departed friend he has given a true character in a Latin *Epitaph*, inscribed on his monument in Streatham church. Besides the example of affecting gratitude which it records, it is preserved here as an instance of the facility with which the heart of a friend finds topics of praise, to endear a worthy man to posterity, without falsehood or adulation. The morality of the conclusion is striking and instructive.

" In the same tomb lie interred his father Ralph Thrale, a man of vigour and activity, and his only son, Henry, who died before his father, aged ten years. Thus a happy and opulent family, raised by the grandfather, and augmented by the father, became extinguished with the grandson. *Go* reader; and, reflecting on the vicissitudes of all human affairs, meditate on eternity!"

* *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 159, 160.

Hic conditur quod reliquum est
HENRICI THRALE,
Qui res seu civiles, seu domesticas, ita egit,
Ut vitam illi longiorem multi optarent;
Ita sacras,
Ut quam brevem esset habiturus præscire videretur;
Simplex, apertus, sibique semper similis,
Nihil ostentavit aut arte fictum aut cura
Elaboratum.
In senatu, regi patriæque
Fideliter studuit;
Vulgi obstrepentis contemptor animosus,
Domi inter mille mercaturæ negotia
Literarum elegantiam minimè neglexit.
Amicis quocunque modo laborantibus
Conciliis, auctoritate, muneribus, adfuit.
Inter familiares, comites, convivas, hospites,
Tam facili fuit morum suavitate
Ut omnium animos ad se alliceret;
Tam felici sermonis libertate
Ut nulli adulatus, omnibus placeret.
Natus 1724. Obiit 1781.
Consortes tumuli habet Rodolphum patrem, strenuum
Fortemque virum, et Henricum filium unicum,
Quem spei parentum mors inopina decennem præripuit.
Ita
Domus felix et opulenta, quam erexit
Avus, auxitque pater, cum nepote decidit.
Abi Viator!
Et vicibus rerum humanarum perspectis,
Æternitatem cogita!

With Thrale,* many of the comforts of Johnson's life may be said to have expired. If his friend had foreseen, that the comforts which his family afforded him, would now in a great measure cease, it is probable he would have made a liberal provision for him for his life; which, from a fortune like his, would have been a very inconsiderable deduction, and could not have been of long duration. The office, however, of one of his executors, which seemed to be but a continuation of the friendship that subsisted between them, Johnson took upon him, with a very earnest con-

* This most amiable and worthy gentleman certainly deserved every tribute of gratitude from Johnson and his literary friends, who were always welcome at his hospitable table; it must therefore give us great concern to see his origin degraded by any of them, in a manner that might be extremely injurious to his elegant and accomplished daughters, if it could not be contradicted; for his father is represented to have been a common drayman; whereas he is well known to have been a respectable citizen, who increased a fortune, originally not contemptible, and proved his mind had been always liberal, by giving a superior education to his son.

BISHOP PERCY.

cern; and continued to show a kind attention to his widow and children as long as it was acceptable. When it was at last resolved the brewery should be sold, he said to Mr Langton, "Mrs Thrale is disincumbered of her brew-house; and it seemed to the purchaser so far from an evil, that he was content to give for it L.135,000." *

In the beginning of the year 1782, when he was labouring under the oppression of a troublesome asthma, and the female inmates of his melancholy dwelling, Miss Williams and Mrs Desmoulins, "were very sickly," he was suddenly deprived of Mr Levett, the humble companion and faithful friend of forty years. He died on the 19th of January, about seven in the morning, by a sudden stroke. "I suppose," he said, "not one minute passed between health and death! So uncertain are human things.—So has ended the long life of a very useful and very blameless man." † Under the impres-

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iv. p. 137.

† Ibid. p. 138, 139.

sion of this shock, he addressed the moral Muse, for the last time, with the happiest success, and paid a tribute to the memory of *Robert Levett*, in an affecting and characteristic *Elegy*, which will remain a monument of the unwearied exertions of that obscure, but most amiable philanthropist, and of the grateful tenderness and durable affection of the author towards his old domestic companion, as long as the language in which it is written shall endure. The exquisite pathos, and energetic simplicity of the following stanzas, especially the bold personification of poverty and disease in the last, are not surpassed by any thing in the whole compass of English poetry.

"Well tried, through many a varying year,
See Levett to the grave descend;
Officious, innocent, sincere,
Of ev'ry friendless name the friend.

"When fainting Nature called for aid,
And hov'ring Death prepar'd the blow,
His vigorous remedy displayed
The pow'r of Art without the show.

"In Mis'ry's darkest cavern known,
His useful care was ever nigh;
Where hopeless Anguish pour'd his groan,
And lonely Want retired to die.

The successive losses of those friends, whom kindness had rendered dear, or habit made necessary to him, reminded Johnson of his own mortality, and awakened the awful consideration of futurity.

After the death of Thrale, his visits to Streatham, where he no longer looked upon himself as welcome, became less frequent. In the course of this year, he complains that he "passed the summer at Streatham; but there was no Thrale." On the 6th of October we find him making "a parting use of the library" with pious solemnity; and having pronounced a prayer, which he composed for the happiness of the family, the effusion of a heart overflowing with gratitude for "the comforts and conveniencies which he had enjoyed at that place," for many years, he took a final leave of the dwelling of his friend, and removed to his own house in town.

For the discontinuance of her attention, in alleviating the infirmities of old age, and contributing all in her power to the prolongation of a life so valuable, Mrs Thrale has made the following peevish and ungracious apology.

"The original reason of our connection, his *particularly disordered health and spirits*, had been long at an end, and he had no other ailments than old age and general infirmity. Veneration for his virtue, reverence for his talents, delight in his conversation, and habitual endurance of a yoke my husband first put upon me, and of which he contentedly bore his share, for sixteen or seventeen years, made me go on so long with Mr Johnson; but the perpetual confinement I will own to have been terrifying in the first years of our friendship, and irksome in the last; nor could I pretend to support it without help, when my coadjutor was no more." *

A friendly correspondence continued, however, between Johnson and Mrs Thrale, with-

* Mrs Piozzi's Anecdotes, &c. p. 293.

out interruption, till the summer following, when she retired to Bath, and informed him, that she was going to dispose of herself in marriage to Signior Gabriel Piozzi, an Italian music master. Johnson, in his relation of executor to her husband, and in gratitude to his memory, was under an obligation to promote the welfare of his family. He endeavoured, therefore, by prudent counsels and friendly admonition, to prevent that which he thought one of the greatest evils which could befal the children of his friend, the alienation of the affections of their mother. "The answer to his friendly monition," says Sir John Hawkins, "I have seen: it is written from Bath, and contains an indignant vindication, as well of her conduct as her fame; an inhibition of Johnson from following her to Bath; and a farewel, concluding, 'till you have changed your opinion of ..... let us converse no more.' In his farewel epistle, 8th July 1784, addressed to *Mrs Piozzi*, who had then announced her marriage, he says, "What you have done, however I may la-

ment it, I have no pretence to resent, as it has not been injurious to me; I therefore breathe out one sigh more of tenderness, perhaps useless, but at least sincere. I wish that God may grant you every blessing; that you may be happy in this world for its short continuance, and eternally happy in a better state; and whatever I can contribute to your happiness I am ever ready to repay, for that kindness which soothed twenty years of a life radically wretched.—The tears stand in my eyes." *

Excluded from the dwelling and family of his friend, he was compelled to return to his own house, to spend cheerless hours among the objects of his bounty, when increasing age and infirmities had made their company more obnoxious than when he left them; and the society of which he had been recently deprived, rendered him, by comparison, less patient to endure it.

* *Johnson's Letters*, vol. ii. p. 375.

From this time, the narrative of his life is little more than a recital of the pressures of melancholy and disease, and of numberless excursions taken to calm his anxiety, and soothe his apprehensions of the terrors of death, by flying, as it were, from himself. He was now doomed to feel all those calamities incident to length of days, which he had so eloquently enumerated in his *Vanity of Human Wishes*, as an antidote against the desire for life.

Although, in the course of his literary life, he deliberately left his political opinions and critical judgments, to defend themselves in the world, under the protection of his name; yet, as the acknowledged friend of religion and virtue, he constantly evinced a conscientious readiness to vindicate the moral tendency of his writings from any dangerous misconstruction.

A clergyman at Bath, about this time, wrote to him, that a passage in the "Beauties of Johnson,"* under the article *Death*,

* Published by Kearsley, in 8vo, 1781.

had been pointed out by a writer in the "Morning Chronicle," as supposed by some readers to recommend suicide; the words being, "To die is the fate of man; but to die with lingering anguish is generally his folly."

"Of the passage you mention," Johnson replied, "I remember some notice in some paper; but knowing that it must be misrepresented, I thought of it no more, nor do I now know where to find it in my own books. I suppose the tenor is this: "Acute diseases are the immediate and inevitable strokes of Heaven; but of them the pain is short, and the conclusion speedy; chronical disorders, by which we are suspended in tedious torture between life and death, are commonly the effect of our own misconduct and intemperance. To die," &c. The sentiment thus explained, though clothed in different language, not inferior to that of the original, relieved the good man from error, and is quite unexceptionable.*

* The "seasonable admonition" of his correspondent drew from him the following explanation in the "Morning Chronicle" of May 29. 1782.—

The esteem and kindness of wise and good men he always valued very highly; and the Rev. Mr Wilson of Clitherowe in Lancashire, having, this year, dedicated to him his "Archæological Dictionary," he acknowledged this mark of respect in terms of peculiar elegance and delicacy. "The notice which I have received from you," said he, "I consider as giving to my name, not only more bulk, but

"A correspondent having mentioned in the "Morning Chronicle" of Dec. 12. the last clause of the following paragraph, as seeming to favour suicide, we are requested to print the whole passage, that its true meaning may appear, which is not to recommend suicide, but exercise.

"Exercise cannot secure us from that dissolution to which we are decreed; but while the soul and body continue united, it can make the association pleasing, and give probable hopes that they shall be disjoined by an easy separation. It was a principle among the ancients, that acute diseases are from Heaven, and chronical from ourselves: the dart of death indeed falls from heaven, but we poison it by our own misconduct. To die is the fate of man; but to die with lingering anguish is generally his folly." RAMBLER, No. 85.

See the Correspondence in the "Gentleman's Magazine" for February 1786.

more weight; not only as extending its superficies, but as increasing its value." *

In 1783, the importunate and oppressive disorder which debarred him from the pleasures, and obstructed him in the duties of life, harassed him with aggravated severity; but his curiosity was still unabated; and the same ardour for literature, the same kindness for his friends, and the same vivacity in writing, distinguished his conversation and his correspondence.

An opportunity, among others, occurred this year, of showing that his obliging service to authors was ready as ever, and that his poetical and critical powers were undiminished. He revised Mr Crabbe's poem, entitled, "The Village;" and, approving the representation of rustic manners which it contains, he not only suggested slight corrections and variations, but furnished some entire lines, when he thought he could improve

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iv. p. 172.

the author's meaning without impairing the distinguished merit of the performance. *

About this time, Mr Shaw, a clergyman in the Highlands, having been engaged in collecting materials for his "Gaelic Dictionary," entertained doubts of the authenticity

* Of the process which he observed, the following paragraph is an example; the original being marked by Roman, and Johnson's substitution in Italic characters.

"In fairer scenes, where peaceful pleasures spring,
Tityrus, the pride of Mantuan swains, might sing;
But charmed by him, or smitten with his views,
Shall modern poets court the Mantuan muse?
From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,
Where Fancy leads, or Virgil led the way?"

"*On Mincio's banks, in Cæsar's bounteous reign,*
If Tityrus found the golden age again,
Must sleepy bards the flattering dream prolong
Mechanic echoes of the Mantuan song?
From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,
Where Virgil, not where Fancy, leads the way?"

"The Village" has been reprinted in Mr Davenport's elegant miscellany, "The Poetical Register," vol. 5th, and collectedwith Mr Crabbe's poetical works, which deservedly rank among the favoured productions of the English Muse.

of the poems ascribed to Ossian; and, divesting himself of national prejudice, published a pamphlet, stating the grounds of his suspicion of the fabrications of Mr Macpherson; which was answered by Mr Clark, a land-surveyor in Edinburgh, with much vehemence and asperity.* Johnson, as might be expected, approved of the argument in Mr Shaw's pamphlet, as it supported the side of the question which he espoused; and, thinking as well of the author's candour and honesty as of his opinions, not only took him into his protection,† but gave him his assistance in writing a *Reply* to Mr Clark's "Answer," which bears the characteristic marks of his style, and has been considered by impartial judges as decisive of the controversy.

* "Answer to Mr Shaw's Observations on the Authenticity of the poems ascribed to Ossian, by John Clark", 8vo, 1782.

† In consequence of which Mr Shaw afterwards obtained considerable preferment in the Church of England.

Meanwhile, the warnings of the failure of his constitution made an alarming progress. Besides an asthmatic complaint, for which he had been bled frequently, he was occasionally afflicted with the gout, and endured, for some months, considerable pain from a *sarcocele*, that disappeared without excision. On the 17th of June, he suffered a stroke of the palsy, so sudden, and so violent, that it awakened him from a sound sleep, and rendered him for some hours speechless. As usual, his recourse under this affliction was to piety. He tried to repeat the Lord's prayer, first in English, then in Latin, and afterwards in Greek, but succeeded only in the last attempt; after which he was again deprived of the power of articulation. Retaining, however, the full use of his senses, he made signs for pen, ink, and paper, and wrote a card to his neighbour, Mr Allen, the printer, "that he might have a discreet friend at hand to act as occasion should require." He then wrote to Dr Taylor to come to him, and bring Dr Heberden; and

sent for his neighbour Dr Brockelsby.* The physicians came immediately to his assistance; and he recovered so rapidly from this formidable attack, that, in the month of July, he was able to make a visit to Mr Langton at Rochester; and in the course of the summer made little excursions as easily as at any time of his life.

On the occasion of his recovery from the palsy, and the declining health of Miss Williams, who was confined to her bed during his illness, he composed the following prayer, according to his habitual course of piety.

"Almighty God, who in thy late visitation hast shewn mercy to me, and now sendest to my companion disease and decay, grant me grace so to employ the life which thou hast prolonged, and the faculties which thou hast preserved, and so to receive the ad-

* Dr Lawrence, his intimate friend and physician, had suffered a paralytic stroke in 1782, and retired to Canterbury, where he died "almost on the same day with his youngest son," at an advanced age, in the course of this year.

monition which the sickness of my friend, by thy appointment, gives me, that I may be constant in all holy duties, and be received at last to eternal happiness." *

In August, while on a visit at Heale, the seat of Mr Bowles in Wiltshire, he saw Stonehenge, on Salisbury plain, for the first time; "a druidical monument" he conjectured, "of at least two thousand years; probably the most ancient work of man upon the island. Salisbury cathedral, and its neighbour Stonehenge, are two eminent monuments of art and rudeness, and may show the first essay, and the last perfection, in architecture." †

While he "was entertained at Heale quite to his mind," he was informed by Dr Brocklesby of the death of Miss Williams, the last but one of his domestic companions; a loss which he lamented with all the tenderness that a long connection naturally inspires.

* *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 226.

† *Johnson's Letters*, &c. vol. ii. p. 317.

This was another shock, to a mind like his, ever agitated by the frequency of death, and the dread of his own dissolution.

On his return from Wiltshire in September, he wrote to Dr Burney, "I came home, on the 18th, to a very disconsolate house. My domestic companion is taken from me. She is much missed, for her acquisitions were many, and her curiosity universal, so that she partook of every conversation. I am not well enough to go much out; and to sit, and fast alone, is very wearisome." *

In a letter to Mr Langton, Sept. 29, he writes, "I have lost a companion to whom I have had recourse for domestic amusement for thirty years, and whose variety of knowledge never was exhausted; and now return to a habitation, vacant and desolate. Her death following that of Levett has now made my house a solitude. She left her little substance to a charity-school. She is, I hope,

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iv. p. 248.

where there is neither darkness nor want, nor sorrow." *

The solitude in which this home deprivation left him, labouring under a complication of disorders, with nobody but Mrs Desmoulins, who was herself afflicted with sickness, to soothe his anxious moments, rendered his house uncomfortable, and his life very gloomy. His nights were restless, by the oppression of asthma, his "constant and radical disease;" and his days, though "crowded with visits," were heavy and cheerless.

"You have more than once," he writes to Mrs Thrale, "wondered at my complaint of solitude, when you hear that I am crowded with visits. *Inopem me copia fecit.* Visitors are no proper companions in the chamber of sickness. They come when I could sleep, or read; they stay till I am weary; they force me to attend when my mind calls for relaxation, and to speak when my powers will hardly actuate my tongue. The

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iv. p. 250.

amusements and consolations of languor and depression are conferred by familiar and domestic companions, which can be visited or called at will, and can occasionally be quitted or dismissed, who do not obstruct accommodation by ceremony, or destroy indolence by awakening effort. Such society I had with Levett and Williams; such I had, where—— I am never likely to have it more." *

The wearisome solitude of the long evenings, at length, suggested to him a refuge from miserable destitution, and cheerless meditation, in the institution of an evening club. Sir John Hawkins has mentioned the cordiality with which he mustered the surviving members of the old Ivy-Lane Club, Mr Ryland, Mr Payne, and himself, twice at a tavern in St Paul's church-yard, and once at his own house, upon the same social plan. He joined with Dr Brocklesby, about the beginning of December, in establishing a conversation-club, to consist of twenty-four members, to meet

* *Johnson's Letters*, vol. ii. p. 341.

three days in the week, at the *Essex-Head*, in Essex-street, in the Strand, then kept by an old servant of Mr Thrale's. A select number of his friends, respectable for their rank, their talents, and their literature, entered very heartily into the scheme, for the pleasure of enjoying his conversation, and of contributing to his comfort. The club was founded, according to his own words, "in frequency and parsimony;" partaking more of the *converzationi* of the Italians than of the *good cheer* of Englishmen.* He composed a set of *Rules* for its government,† as Ben

* Sir John Hawkins has represented this club, to which he was not invited, as a vulgar ale-house association, dishonourable to Johnson. The terms, indeed, were lax, and the expences light, "every member present being required to spend at least sixpence," and the absentees "to forfeit three pence;" but Johnson could suffer no degradation in a confraternity of such persons as the Honourable Daines Barrington, Dr Brocklesby, Dr Horsley, Mr Windham, Mr Nichols, Mr Tyers, Mr Joddrell, Mr Boswell, Mr Murphy, Dr Burney, Mr Cooke, Mr Paradise, Mr Ryland, Mr Seward, Mr Bowles, &c.

† See Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iv. p. 265-6.

Jonson did his *Leges Conviviales*, at the Devil Tavern, and prefixed this motto, from Milton;

> "To-day deep thoughts with me resolve to drink
> In mirth, which after no repentance draws."

The convenience of a conversation-club, to which, throughout his whole life, he was extremely partial, proved, at this time, but a weak and casual relief from bodily suffering, and mental disquietude; and the amusement which he promised himself from this institution was but of short duration.

Towards the end of the year, his returning complaints confined him to the house; he was seized with a most violent fit of spasmodic asthma; the muscles of his breast were much convulsed; for fear of that uneasiness to which a supine posture exposed him, he durst not go to bed, but sat all night in his chair; and, at the same time, dropsical swellings were visible in his legs and thighs, that increased with alarming rapidity.

The recital of the melancholy vicissitudes of suffering and of sorrow, has brought the

narrative of declining age to the beginning of the year 1784; the last year of the life of this great and good man; in which, though the general vigour of his constitution was progressively declining, with only the interruption of some transient intervals of convalescence, he continued to exert the transcendent powers of his mind, in conversation, with unabated energy and vivacity, and to manifest, in solitary meditation, the same pious submission to the inconveniences of time, as to the other dispensations of Eternal Goodness.

He attended the Essex-Head Club, for some time, with punctuality; but during the winter, which happened to be uncommonly severe, the paroxysms of asthma returned, with short remissions, and the dropsy gained ground upon him daily; so that he was swelled from head to foot, and confined to the house about three months.

Meanwhile, Dr Brocklesby and Dr Heberden paid their friendly visits with assiduity; and Mr Boswell, to soothe the anxious apprehen-

sion of his venerable friend, "asked Drs Cullen, Hope, and Monro of Edinburgh about his case." These eminent physicians, without a regular consultation, gave their opinions and prescriptions gratuitously, with a liberality of sentiment rising to the just and elegant compliment which Johnson paid their profession in his *Life of Garth.*

"I believe every man has found in physicians great liberality and dignity of sentiment, very prompt effusions of beneficence, and willingness to exert a lucrative art, where there is no hope of lucre."

The medicines prescribed by the physicians of London and Edinburgh were so efficacious, that, in the month of February, while he was offering up his prayers, the dropsical swellings suddenly subsided, in consequence of a most profuse and unexpected evacuation of twenty pints of water.

Being eased of the dropsy by a course of medicine, and the asthma, unless irritated by cold, giving him little trouble, he began to entertain hopes that the vigour of his consti-

tution was not entirely broken, and to anticipate the return of mild weather, and the advantages of change of air, to perfect his recovery.

The interval of convalescence which he enjoyed during the summer, enabled him to perform a journey to Oxford, accompanied by Mr Boswell, with tolerable ease; and the beneficial influence of the warmth of climate induced him to express a wish to pass the winter in Italy; and satisfy, at the same time, a lingering desire to visit the shores of the Mediterranean, the scene of the most memorable events in the history of the world. Upon this subject, however, his wishes had been anticipated by the anxiety of his friends to preserve his health. His pension not being deemed by them adequate to support the expence of the journey, an application was made to his Majesty by Mr Boswell and Sir Joshua Reynolds, through the intervention of Lord Chancellor Thurlow, for an augmentation of L.200. The application was unsuccessful; but the Chancellor, in the handsomest

manner, offered to let him have L.500 from his own purse, under the appellation of a loan, but with the intention of conferring it as a present. Johnson, however, declined the offer, with a gratitude and dignity of sentiment rising almost to an equal elevation with the generosity of Lord Thurlow, in the following letter.

"After a long, and not inattentive observation of mankind, the generosity of your Lordship's offer raises in me not less wonder than gratitude. Bounty so liberally bestowed, I should gladly receive if my condition made it necessary; for to such a mind, who would not be proud to own his obligations? But it has pleased God to restore me to so great a measure of health, that if I should now appropriate so much of a fortune destined to do good, I could not escape from myself the charge of advancing a false claim. My journey to the Continent, though I once thought it necessary, was never much encouraged by my physicians; and I was very desirous that your Lordship should be told of it by

Sir Joshua Reynolds, as an event very uncertain; for if I grew much better I should not be willing; if much worse, not able to migrate. Your Lordship was first solicited without my knowledge; but when I was told that you were pleased to honour me with your patronage, I did not expect to hear of a refusal; yet, as I have had no long time to brood hope, and have not rioted in imaginary opulence, this cold reception has been scarce a disappointment; and from your Lordship's kindness, I have received a benefit which only men like you are able to bestow. I shall now live *mihi cârior*, with a higher opinion of my own merit." *

It is also to be recorded to the honour of his amiable physician Dr Brocklesby, that, upon the unexpected failure of the application, in a high quarter, he offered him L.100 a-year for his life, payable quarterly, during his residence on the Continent. This generous offer he declined, with grateful sensibility, for the

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iv. p. 365.

reasons assigned to Lord Thurlow; and, indeed, he was now approaching fast to a state in which money could be of no avail. The scheme of trying the air of Italy, so flattering to his imagination, was impracticable, not from an augmentation of his income being necessary, but because his life was drawing rapidly to its termination.

Although he performed the journey to Oxford, without much lassitude, yet the participation of the social and literary amusements of his favourite residence brought no accession of strength, nor any alleviation of his languor. His old friends, Dr Wheeler and Dr Edwards had paid the debt of nature, and were gone, since his last residence in College; and the reflection on his successive losses aggravated the sensation of his misery, and clouded the prospect of futurity. In the moments of abstraction from company, the remembrance of his deceased friends recurred continually to his mind; and whoever sat near him might observe the tears of tender recollection start-

ing in his eyes, and hear him muttering, in a faultering tone, "Poor man! and then he died."

Soon after he returned home, under the oppression of renewed attacks of the asthma, and the apprehension of the dropsy "watching an opportunity to return," he took an affectionate and solemn leave of his confidential friend and fellow-traveller Mr Boswell, returning to Scotland; which impressed him with a melancholy foreboding, eventually verified, of their long, long separation.

His complaints still increasing, as the summer, "gloomy, frigid, and ungenial," advanced, on the 13th of July, he set out on a visit to his long-tried friend Dr Taylor, at Ashbourne; flattering himself that he might be relieved, by partaking a while the quiet of retirement in the country, and exchanging the smoky atmosphere of the metropolis for the salubrious air of the Peak of Derbyshire.

He got to Lichfield, in two days, with very little fatigue; but being unable to walk

with ease, he staid only five days there; and, with the sick man's impatience of the present scene, proceeded to Ashbourne, in hope of help from new air, change of place, and regularity.

In the solitude of retirement at Ashbourne, which had been his occasional residence, in his "summer wanderings," for many years, he was completely domesticated. His friend's chariot was always ready for his morning drive, and a liberal provision was made for affording him every kind of comfort and convenience suited to his valetudinary state of health.

For some time after he came to Ashbourne, he again rallied, and was able to extend his daily excursions to Chatsworth, and to accept invitations from the Duke of Devonshire, and the gentlemen of the neighbourhood. But the remission of one ailment did not not enable nature to subdue the rest. The freedom of respiration became obstructed, after a short interval of relaxation. His general strength

of body gained no increase, and the water gradually encroached upon him again.

While he was struggling with a difficult respiration, and drooping with languor and debility, he composed several *Prayers* adapted to his circumstances, in a strain of humble, penetential piety; and translated a serious *Ode* from Horace (*Lib. iv. Ode vii.*) on the changes of nature, and the vicissitudes of the seasons, in the anticipation of the approach of his own inevitable dissolution.

> "The changing year's successive plan
> Proclaims mortality to man." *

During his stay at Ashbourne, Mr David Barclay, † the friend of Mr Scott, the amiable poet of Amwell, knowing that he respected his deceased friend ‡; and judging that some

* An elegant paraphrastic translation of this Ode is printed among Hamilton's Poems, "Works of the British Poets," vol. ix. p. 421.

† Grandson of the Apologist of the Quakers.

‡ He died on the 12th December 1783, in the 54th year of his age. See the Life of Scott, "Works of the British Poets," vol. xi. p. 717–28.

anecdotes of so deserving a character ought to be handed down to posterity, requested him to write an Account of his Life, to be prefixed to a posthumous volume of "Essays," then in the press, for which he would endeavour to furnish materials. To this application, Johnson, ever ready to pay attention to the calls of friendship and benevolence, returned, Sept. 16th, the following answer.

"As I have made some advances towards recovery, and loved Mr Scott, I am willing to do justice to his memory. You will be pleased to get what account you can of his life, with dates; and when I return we will contrive how our materials can be best employed." *

The miserable state of his health, declining from this time, almost daily, having prevented him from undertaking the biography of Mr Scott, and frustrated the kind intentions of Mr Barclay, the task of recording the particulars of his life devolved on his friend Mr Hoole, which he performed with equal truth and tenderness.

* Scott's "Critical Essays," &c. 8vo. 1785.

Having protracted his stay at Ashbourne beyond two months, without obtaining the alleviation of his complaints which his wishes persuaded him to expect, he grew weary of solitude, and, on the 27th of September, removed to Lichfield, a place of more society and amusement, but otherwise of less convenience.

As he had now very faint hopes of recovery, it might have been supposed that he would naturally have chosen to remain in the comfortable house of his step-daughter, Miss Porter, surrounded by friends who loved and revered him, and for whom he had a very sincere affection, and ended his life where he drew his first breath; but he still found that such conversation as London affords, could be found no where else. "The town," he said to Dr Brocklesby, "is my element; there are my friends, there are my books, to which I have not yet bid farewel; and there are my amusements."*

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iv. p. 177.

He lingered in Lichfield, in a languid condition, till the beginning of November, when he took a last view of his native city, and came to Birmingham, where he passed a few days with his old school-fellow Mr Hector,* and his sister Mrs Careless, the object of his early affection and constant attachment. He then proceeded to Oxford, which he left after four days, and arrived in London on the 16th of November, after an absence of four months.

The fine and firm feelings of friendship which occupied so large a portion of Johnson's heart, were eminently displayed in the affectionate correspondence which he maintained, and the many tender interviews which took place between him and his friends, during his excursion into Derbyshire and Staffordshire; an excursion which seems to have been undertaken, rather from a sense of his approaching dissolution, and a warm wish to bid those he loved a last and long farewel,

* This early and worthy friend of Johnson died at Birmingham, Sept. 2. 1794.

than from any rational hope that air and exercise would restore him to his former health and vigour.

Soon after he came home, both the asthma and dropsy, which never left him, became more violent and distressful. Contemplating a constitution broken by sickness and age, and finding very little ground for hope that he had much longer to live, he prepared to meet the doom, from which there is no exemption to man, with firmness and resignation. Eternity presented to his imagination an awful prospect; and with as much virtue as, in general, is the lot of man, he shuddered at the approach of his dissolution. He felt strong perturbations of mind. His friends endeavoured all in their power to awaken the comfortable reflections of a life well spent, and calm the fears of the approaching trial. They prayed fervently with him; and he poured out occasionally the warmest effusions of piety and devotion.

From the 6th of July he had kept a journal of the state of his illness, and the remedies

which he used, under the title of *Ægri Ephemeris;* but continued it no longer than the 8th of November, finding, perhaps, that it was a mournful and unavailing register.

Under the pressure of bodily distress, and the apprehension of his approaching end, his attachment to the interests of literature, which had been the ruling passion of his life, was still predominant. He communicated to Mr Nichols a paper, containing the names of the Authors of the "Universal History," distinguishing their several shares, in the handwriting of Mr Swinton of Oxford, one of the principal compilers of the work. The original paper, according to his direction, was deposited in the British Museum, "that the veracity of the account may never be doubted." It was also printed, by his express desire, with the letter that accompanied it, in the "Gentleman's Magazine;"* the same mis-

* "Mr Swinton—The History of the Carthaginians, Numidians, Mauritanians, Gætulians, Garamantes, Melano Gætulians, Nigritæ, Cyrenaica, Marmarica, the Regio Syrtica, Turks, Tartars, and Moguls, Indians,

cellany having been selected by him as the repository of perhaps the last scrap of intelligence he ever dictated for the press, which

Chinese, Dissertation on the Peopling of America, Dissertation on the Independency of the Arabs;—the Cosmogony, and a small part of the history immediately following, by Mr Sale;—to the birth of Abraham, chiefly by Mr Shelvocke;—History of the Jews, Gauls, and Spaniards, and Xenophon's Retreat, by Mr Psalmanazar * —History of the Persians, and of the Constantinopolitan Empire, by Dr Campbell;—History of the Romans, by Mr Bower."

Gentleman's Magazine for December 1784.

* George Psalmanazar, the fictitious name of a very extraordinary person, a native of France, who wrote the fabulous history of the island of Formosa, though an impostor, obtained the friendship of Johnson, who forgot his fabrications, in his esteem for his talents, and reverence for his virtues. "They conversed," Mrs Piozzi tells us, "about general topics, religion and learning, of which both were undoubtedly stupendous examples. I have heard Johnson say, 'that Psalmanazar's piety, penitence, and virtue, exceeded almost what we read as wonderful in the lives of the saints.' When I asked him who was the *best* man he had ever known, 'Psalmanazar' was the unexpected reply." Such was the ascendency of his exemplary piety on the mind of Johnson, that he said to Mr Boswell, "I should as soon think of contradicting a Bishop." His death happened in 1773.

had been the vehicle of his earliest contributions to English literature. He also translated, during his sleepless nights, many of the *Epigrams* in the *Greek Anthologia* * into Latin verse, after the example of Buchanan, Grotius, and others, who had paid a similar tribute to literature.

His solicitude to discharge every duty, and every obligation, was evinced by paying a guinea to Mr Faden, the geographer, near Charing Cross, which he had borrowed of his father about thirty years before; and another debt of L.10, which he had borrowed from his friend Mr Hamilton, the printer, about twenty years before. If the question recur, why were these debts so long suffered to remain? Johnson could probably have given a satisfactory answer. He may have been doubtful whether they were not already discharged; and being at last determined to err on the safe side, chose to pay them over again, in order to remove every scruple from his mind.

* Brodæi edit. Bas. Ann. 1549.

The sense of his situation predominated, and his "affection for his departed relations seemed to grow warmer as he approached nearer to the time when he might hope to see them again." * He composed the following *Epitaph* for his father, mother, and brother; and wrote to Mr Green, apothecary in Lichfield, December 2d, desiring that it might be "engraved on a stone, deep, massy, and hard," laid on the exact place of interment, in the middle aisle of St Michael's Church; and hoped "it might be done while he was yet alive."

H. S. E.

MICHAEL JOHNSON,

Vir impavidus, constans, animosus, periculorum immemor, laborum patientissimus; fiducia christiana fortis, fervidusque, pater-familias apprime strenuus; bibliopola admodum peritus; mente et libris et negotiis exculta; animo ita firmo, ut, rebus adversis diu conflictatus, nec sibi nec suis defuerit: lingua sic temperata, ut ei nihil quod aures, vel pias, vel castas læsisset, aut dolor, vel voluptas unquam expresserit.

Natus Cubleiæ, in agro Derbiensi, Anno 1656,
Obiit 1731.

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iv. p. 420.

Apposita est SARA, conjux,
Antiqua FORDORUM gente oriunda; quam domi sedulam, foris paucis notam; nulli molestam, mentis acumine et judicii subtilitate præcellentem; aliis multum, sibi parum indulgentem: Æternitati semper attentam, omne fere virtutis nomen commendavit.

Nata Nortoniæ Regis, in agro Varvicensi, Anno 1669;
Obiit 1759.

Cum NATHANAELE illorum filio, qui natus 1712, cum vires et animi, et corporis multa pollicerentur, Anno 1737, vitam brevem pia morte finivit.

He meditated, at the same time, a Latin inscription to the memory of Garrick; but his strength was exhausted, and he left no memorial of his deceased friend in this confined and difficult species of composition.

While he was daily and gradually growing weaker, and striving to reconcile himself to the thought of dying, he experienced the assiduous respect and kind attachment of his numerous friends. Among others, Mr Langton, Sir John Hawkins, the Rev. Mr Strahan, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Mr Hoole, who revered the dying sage, and wished to prepare him for the inevitable termination, were constant in their attendance on him, throughout

his illness, and co-operated in calming his agitation, and confirming his confidence in the Divine Mercy.

Nobody was more assiduous in contributing to soothe and comfort him, in his last moments, than Mr Langton.* Once, when he was sitting by his bedside, Johnson seized his hand, and exclaimed, with emphatic tenderness, *Te teneam moriens deficiente manu.* Mr Windham, who, "in the regions of lite-

* This amiable and worthy man was beloved by Johnson, for his ardent love of literature, his exemplary piety, singular humility, and suavity of manners. Speaking of him to Mr Boswell, in 1777, Johnson's noble testimony in his favour was, "The earth does not bear a worthier man than Bennet Langton." On another occasion, when Mr Boswell mentioned a very eminent friend of theirs, as a virtuous man, Johnson's reply was, "Yes, Sir, but he has not the evangelical virtue of Langton." After conversing on death and its awful consequences, in 1784, he said to Mr Boswell, "I know not who will go to heaven if Langton does not. Sir, I could almost say, *sit anima mea cum Langtono.*" He succeeded Johnson as Professor of Ancient Literature in the Royal Academy, and died on the 10th December 1801, in the 65th year of his age.

rature," he said, "was *inter ignes Luna minores*," suspended the functions of the statesman to watch his death-bed with the most affectionate solicitude. Once, when he had placed a pillow conveniently to support him, Johnson thanked him for his kindness, and said, in his characteristic manner, "That will do—— all that a pillow can do *."

The Rev. Mr Strahan, one of his best and tenderest friends, attended him constantly in the discharge of the sacred duties of his profession. He had the church-service read to him regularly, and joined in the responses with a deep and sonorous utterance, and the most profound devotion. In receiving the Holy Sacrament, for which he always made a solemn preparation, he shewed, in the fervent exercise of premeditated prayer, his whole hope and confidence of salvation, in the Divine Mercy, and the merits of the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind.

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iv. p. 141.

Dr Brocklesby, Dr Heberden, Dr Warren, Dr Butter, and Mr Cruickshank, paid their visits assiduously, without accepting any fees; and all that could be done by professional skill and ability, was done, to alleviate the languor of "fainting nature," and prolong a life so truly valuable. Unfortunately, he himself had a smattering of the medical science, and conceived that the dropsical collection of water which oppressed him, might be discharged by making incisions in the calves of his legs. When Mr Cruickshank, unwilling to give him pain, and fearing that a mortification might be the consequence, gently lanced the surface of one leg, he cried out, with his usual resolute defiance of pain, and desire of life, "Deeper, deeper; I want length of life, and you are afraid of giving me pain, which I do not value."

Under the most trying circumstances of accumulated distress, his native fortitude never forsook him. After struggling very hard in the protracted conflict with his infirmities, he asked Dr Brocklesby, as his physician and

friend, to tell him plainly whether he could recover. A direct answer being unavoidable, the Doctor declared, that, in his opinion, he could not recover without a miracle. "Then," said he, "I will take no more physic, not even my opiates, nor any inebriating sustenance, for I have prayed that I may render up my soul to God unclouded." In this resolution he steadily persevered; and used only the weakest sustenance.

As his end drew near, the gloom of despondency that hung over the dying Christian, and intercepted the bright beams of the Divine Mercy, began to disperse. His apprehensions of death, an event which approached, as it does to all, not the less for being apprehended, and which few men were better prepared to meet with fortitude, ceased with his hope of recovery. The strength of religion prevailed against the infirmity of nature; his foreboding dread of the Divine Justice subsided into a pious trust and humble hope of mercy at the Throne of Grace; and devotion shed

its composure and serenity over the closing scene.

A few days before his death, he performed the last solemn act of his life—the making a disposition of what he had to leave; which he had delayed from time to time, from the common weakness of being averse to make a will. Having no near relations, he left the bulk of his property to his faithful servant Francis Barber, whom he looked upon as particularly under his protection, and whom he had all along treated as an humble friend; and appointed Sir John Hawkins, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Dr (now Sir) William Scott, his executors. *

After the settlement of his worldly affairs, in which he had the assistance of Mr Strahan, he asked Sir John Hawkins, as one of his executors, where he meant to bury him. Sir John Hawkins answered, "Doubtless in Westminster Abbey." "If," said he, "my executors think it proper to mark the spot of

* See Appendix.

my interment by a stone, let it be so placed as to protect my body from injury." * Sir John Hawkins assured him it should be done.

While life was ebbing to its close, the consideration of the danger to which posthumous fame is liable, struck his mind with a sudden anxiety; and he employed some portion of the short intervals of abstraction from bodily pain, in burning, precipitately and indiscriminately, large masses of papers and letters, which were in great confusion, and many of which, it may be, were never intended for the public eye. Among the letters, "those written by his mother drew from him a flood of tears: when the paper they were written on was all consumed, Mr Sastres saw him cast a melancholy look upon their ashes, which he took up and examined, to see if a word was still legible." † Miss Molly Aston's letters perished also in the flames; "though he once told me himself," says Mrs Piozzi, "they

* Hawkins's Life, &c. p. 589.

† *Johnson's Letters*, vol. ii. p. 382.

should be the last papers he would destroy and added these lines, with a very faultering voice:

> Then from his closing eye thy form shall part,
> And the last pang shall tear thee from his heart;
> Life's idle business at one gasp be o'er,
> The Muse forgot, and thou belov'd no more. *

Among his papers, the loss of "two quarto volumes, containing a full, fair, and most particular account of his own life, from his earliest recollection †," is much to be regretted; for, if we may judge from the fragments which escaped the flames, undoubtedly many curious and interesting circumstances relating to himself and his contemporaries, have perished.

The decree had gone forth, and the period at length arrived, when he *must die like men, and fall like one of the princes.* On the 12th of December, the day previous to his dissolution, Sir John Hawkins paid his

* *Johnson's Letters*, vol. ii. p. 383.

† Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iv. p. 434.

last visit, and found him very weak; but full of resignation, strengthened in faith, and joyful in hope. His attendants frequently assisted him to sit up in his bed, and move his legs, which were in much pain, when he regularly addressed himself to fervent prayer; and though sometimes his voice failed him, his senses indicated no failure. His appetite was totally gone; the only sustenance he received was cyder and water.

On Monday, the 13th of December, the day on which he died, the desire of retarding his dissolution returned with all its former eagerness. He still imagined that relief might be obtained by making deeper incisions in his legs than Mr Cruickshank had made. To attain the power of easy respiration, at eight in the morning he tried the experiment, and cut deep, where he thought Mr Cruickshank had done it too tenderly; but no effusion of water followed. The loss of blood, though inconsiderable, soon after brought on a dozing, and he felt he had but a few hours to live. Mr Sastres entered the room as he languish-

ed in bed, exhausted by debility and difficult respiration. The dying sage, as soon as he saw him, stretched forth his hand, and, in a tone of lamentation, called out, JAM MORITURUS! His last moments, when they could be abstracted from bodily pain, were spent in prayer and pious ejaculations. His difficulty of breathing increased till about seven o'clock in the evening, when he closed a long life, begun, continued, and ended in virtue, in the 75th year of his age, with so much composure, that his death was only known to the persons in the room, by the ceasing of the sound which accompanied his laborious respiration.

On the 20th of December, his remains, inclosed in a leaden coffin, were deposited in the south transept of Westminster Abbey, near the foot of Shakespeare's monument, and close to the coffin of his friend Garrick. His funeral was attended by a respectable number of his friends, particularly such of the members of the LITERARY CLUB as were then in town. Mr Burke, Sir Joseph Banks, Mr

Windham, Mr Langton, Sir Charles Bunbury, and Mr Colman, bore his pall. In consequence of the indisposition of the Dean of Westminster, the mournful office of reading the burial service devolved on his friend Dr Taylor, the senior prebendary. All the resident members of the Chapter attended, in their hoods and surplices, and performed, with becoming gravity and respect, the honours due to his memory. Agreeable to his request, a large blue flag-stone was placed over his grave, with this inscription:

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.
Obiit XIII die Decembris
Anno Domini
MDCCLXXXIV.
Ætatis suæ LXXV.

A cenotaph to his memory, in St Paul's Cathedral, was resolved upon, soon after his death, with the approbation of the Dean and Chapter, who had come to a resolution about that time of permitting monumental statues to be erected there. This monument, which

cost Eleven hundred Guineas, contributed by the LITERARY CLUB, and his other friends and admirers, was executed by Bacon, and opened to the inspection of the public, Feb. 23. 1796. It consists of a colossal figure leaning against a column; and beneath is the following appropriate and classical epitaph, written by the Rev. Dr Parr,

A . Ω .

SAMUELI . JOHNSON .
Grammatico · et · critico
Scriptorum . Anglicorum . litterate · perito
Poetæ . luminibus . sententiarum
Et · ponderibus · verborum · admirabili
Magistro · virtutis · gravissimo
Homini . optimo . et singularis . exempli

Qui · vixit . Ann . LXXV . mens · II . dieb · XIIII
Decessit . Idib · Decembr · Ann · Christ · CIↃ : IↃCC · LXXXIIII ·
Sepult · in · aed · Sanct . Petr . Westmonasteriens ·
XIII · kal · Januar . Ann . Christ · CIↃ · IↃCC · LXXXV
Amici · et · sodales · litterarii ·
Pecunia · conlata
H · M · faciund · curaver ·

In the Dean's consistory court, adjoining the south transept of the Cathedral Church of Lichfield, a bust has been erected to his memory, with the following inscription.

The Friends of SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.
A native of Lichfield,
Erected this Monument,
As a tribute of respect to the memory of
A man of extensive learning,
A distinguished moral writer, and a sincere
Christian.
He died the 13th of December, 1784, aged 75 years.

As Johnson, during his life, was the most distinguished literary character of his country, so his death attracted the public attention in an uncommon degree, and was followed by an unprecedented accumulation of literary honours, in the various forms of Sermons, Elegies, Memoirs, Lives, Essays, and Anecdotes.

A sermon "On the Difference between the Deaths of the Righteous and the Wicked, illustrated in the instance of Dr Samuel Johnson and David Hume, Esq." was preached be-

fore the University of Oxford, at St Mary's Church, on Sunday, July 23. 1786, by the Rev. William Agutter, A. M. of St Mary Magdalen College, and chaplain to the Asylum;* and Dr Fordyce, in his "Addresses to the Deity," 12mo, 1785, paid an elegant and affectionate tribute to his memory. "The character of Dr Johnson," by Dr Horne, bishop of Norwich, in the "Olla Podrida," Nov. 23. 1787, was recognized as the production of a discriminating judge; and the estimate of his moral and literary qualifications, in "Four Dialogues, containing a comparative view of the

* In this pious and rational discourse, from Job xxi. 23—26, first printed in 8vo. 1800, the preacher particularly examines the causes of Johnson's fears of death, assigns various reasons for the divine permission of the apprehension of the good, and the indifference of the infidel in their last hours, and vindicates and illustrates the ways of Providence, in particular cases, and exposes the slight pretences on which scepticism and irreligion affect to triumph, in the difference *between the deaths of him who feareth God and him who feareth him not.* In the notes taken from the last edition of this narrative, it is a satisfaction to the present writer, to find the sentiments of this able advocate of Christianity concur with and strengthen his own.

Lives, Characters, and Writings of Philip the late Earl of Chesterfield and Dr Samuel Johnson," 12mo, 1787, was received with general approbation. The "Elegy on the Death of Dr Johnson," by Samuel Hobhouse, Esq. 4to, 1785*; was distinguished from the mass of elegiac

* A poem of considerable merit, entitled, "Verses on the Death of Dr Samuel Johnson," was also published by C. Dilly, in the Poultry, 4to, 1785. This poem, which extends to sixteen pages, was written by Thomas Percy, (nephew to the writer of this note), then a scholar of Merchant-Taylor's School, London, aged only 16 years, now LL. D. and Fellow of St John's College, Oxford.

BISHOP PERCY.

The amiable and ingenious author of this poetical tribute to the memory of Johnson, endeared to his friends by his eminent virtues and talents, died on a visit to his cousin, Mrs Isted, at Ecton, in Northamptonshire, after a short illness, May 14. 1808, in the 39th year of his age. He was the editor of the 4th edition of the "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry," 1794, one of the original projectors of "The British Critic," and author of many occasional poetical compositions, characterised by justness and elevation of thought, terseness of expression, and purity and elegance of diction. With him the present writer was connected by the reciprocities of mutual friendship; and to this hour he regrets his loss. See "Miscellanies," by the Hon. Daines Barrington, 4to, 1781, p. 308.

verses on that occasion; and the just, discriminative, and elegant "Poetical Review of the Moral and Literary Character of Dr Johnson," by John Courtenay, Esq. M. P. 4to, 1788, was perused with avidity, by the admirers of wit and learning, and the friends of virtue and liberty. His conduct and genius were examined and illustrated in the rapid "Biographical Sketch of Dr Johnson," by Thomas Tyers, Esq. in the "Gentleman's Magazine," for 1784; the sprightly and entertaining "Anecdotes of Dr

In the brief memorial of Bishop Percy, reprinted p. 250—54, from an obituary notice drawn up by the present writer, for insertion in the public papers, a heavy affliction happened to be overlooked, which he suffered by the death of his only son Henry, at Marseilles, in the south of France, whither he went for the recovery of his health, April 2. 1782, in the 21st year of his age. He was of Emanuel College, Cambridge, and the pride and hope of his family.

Mr Nichols, to whom every man of letters owes obligations, has, unconsciously, gratified the writer of this narrative, by incorporating a considerable portion of the obituary notice, inserted in the public papers at the time of Bishop Percy's death, into the great body of English biography, and bibliography, "Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century," &c. vol. iii. p. 752—54.

Johnson," by Mrs Piozzi, 8vo, 1785; the candid and judicious "Essay on the Life, Character, and Writings of Dr Johnson," by Joseph Towers, LL. D. 8vo, 1786; and the instructive and interesting "Life of Dr Johnson," by James Boswell, Esq. 2 vols. 4to, 1791; which are sufficiently known to the world.

A collected edition of the *Works of Samuel Johnson*, LL. D. was published by the proprietors, under the superintendence of Sir John Hawkins, in 11 vols. 8vo, 1787, to which the editor prefixed the "Life of Dr Johnson," and four more volumes were added at different times. In this edition, his productions are not arranged in the order of publication; several pieces are omitted; and others are attributed to him without foundation. In the "Life," the facts to which his biographer was a witness are related with fidelity; nothing is disguised by the exaggeration of partial affection; the lights and shades of his character are distributed with a strict regard to truth; but too much irrelevant matter is intermixed; and Johnson is hardly the prin-

cipal figure in the foreground of his own picture.

Another edition of his *Works* was brought forward in 12 volumes, 8vo, 1792, with an "Essay on the Life and Genius of Dr Johnson," prefixed by Arthur Murphy, Esq.; the former Life being thought too ponderous and unwieldy for republication *. In this edition, the order observed in the former edition is inverted; some deficiencies are supplied; a few of his *Prayers* and *Letters* are inserted in the twelfth volume; and these articles are omitted which were attributed to him without foundation. The editor's biographical "Essay" is ably executed: it is more concise, and for that reason, more satisfactory than that of his predecessor; and exhibits a just picture of Johnson, because his superior talents and steady virtues need no disguise, and exaggerated praise is unnecessary. In the succinct

* It was, however, reprinted separately, "revised and corrected," in 8vo, 1787.

review of his writings, the editor displays his own learning, judgment, and taste *.

His *Prayers*, interspersed with pious resolutions, and some short memorandums, entitled *Meditations*, were *published from his manuscripts*, according to his dying injunction, *by the Rev. George Strahan*, A. M. in 8vo, 1785. A collection of *Letters to and from the late* SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D. with *some poems never before printed*, was *pub-*

* Four large editions of his collected works have passed through the press: the last, the most correct, elegant and comprehensive, in 12 vols. 8vo, 1710, revised by Mr Chalmers. It would be desirable to see a more complete edition of his works than has yet been published, including his *Prayers and Meditations, Letters, Sermons, The Fountains, a Fairy Tale, Considerations on the Corn Laws*, and his *Prefaces, Dedications, Introductions, Proposals*, &c. which are not altogether temporary or local, omitted in Mr Murphy's edition.

All his small occasional compositions have been noticed, as they were wanted, in the course of this narrative, with the exception of his *Character of the Rev. Zachariah Mudge*, in "The London Chronicle," 1769, *Proposals for publishing an Analysis of the Scoto-Celtic Language, by the Rev. William Shaw*, 1776, and various *Law Arguments*, dictated at different times to Mr Boswell.

lished from the original MSS. *in her possession, by* HESTER LYNCH PIOZZI, in 2 vols. 8vo, 1798. The *Sermons on different subjects, left for publication by John Taylor,* LL. D. *and published by the Rev. Samuel Hayes,* A. M. in 2 vols. 8vo, 1790, have been ascribed to Johnson on indisputable authority. A fragment of "the Account of his own Life," or of another written by him, with the title of *Annals,* having been preserved, contrary to his will, was published in 12mo, 1806, entitled, *An Account of the Life of Dr* SAMUEL JOHNSON, *from his Birth to his Eleventh year, written by himself; to which are added, Original Letters to Dr Samuel Johnson by Miss Hill Boothby, from the* MSS. *preserved by the Doctor, and now in possession of Richard Wright, surgeon, proprietor of the Museum of Antiquities at Lichfield.* *

* This fragment of the early biography of Johnson, occupies twenty-four pages of the volume; and as it extends but to his eleventh year, the minute information contained in it is consequently of little value.

His servant Francis Barber, to whom the burning of his manuscripts was committed, a few days before his

An imperfect collection of his *Poems* was published by Mr Kearsley, in 12mo, 1785, which were printed, with considerable additions, in the edition of "The Works of the English Poets," in 75 vols. 12mo, 1790, with a short account of his Life, by Mr Reed; and reprinted, with the tragedy of *Irene*, and several additional pieces, in "The Works of the British Poets," in 14 vols. 8vo, 1795, with a "Biographical and Critical Preface *," by the present writer. Besides many separate editions of his *Rambler* and *Idler* which have been called for, and bought up by the public, a collected edition was published by Mr Chalmers, in the collection of "The British

death, thought proper to preserve a small part of the papers, probably rather as a relic of his master than with any view to gain. He died in the infirmary at Stafford, after undergoing a painful operation, Feb. 13. 1801. By purchase from his widow, the papers came into the possession of Mr Wright, who sold them to Mr Phillips, bookseller, in London.

* It was reprinted separately, the same year, and entitled, "The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL. D. with Critical Observations on his Works," &c. 8vo.

Essayists," &c. in 45 vols. 12mo, 1803; which was followed by an elegant and faithful account of his "Literary Life," by Dr Drake, in his "Essays, Biographical, Critical, and Historical, illustrative of the Rambler, Adventurer, Idler, and other Periodical Papers," &c. in 2 vols. 12mo. 1809.

In a posthumous collection of pieces, entitled, "Parliamentary Logic: Two Speeches, &c. by the Right Honourable William Gerard Hamilton," 8vo, 1808, edited by Mr Malone; a small tract, entitled, *Considerations on Corn, by Samuel Johnson,* LL. D. found among Mr Hamilton's papers, was printed "as an *Appendix* to these pieces of his friend, that no production of so great a writer as Dr Johnson might be lost *."

* This tract was written in November 1766, when the policy of the parliamentary bounty on the exportation of corn, became a subject of discussion, in consequence of the deficiency of the harvest, which induced his Majesty to prevent the farther exportation of corn, by an embargo. On this important branch of political economy, imperfectly understood, Johnson is the able and enlightened advocate of the bounty on exportation.

The character, talents, and literary labours of Johnson, will be better understood from the narrative of his life, and the chronicle of his writings, than by any laboured and critical comments. Yet it may not be superfluous here to collect into one view, the most distinguishing excellencies, and prominent particularities of the man, and to look back on the powerful exertions of the author, by which he surmounted the discouragements

and shews how readily his great mind could apply itself to an investigation, to which the general course of his studies had little relation.

In his *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 61. there is a passage, "Nov. 1765, on engaging in politics with H——n," meaning, unquestionably, Mr Hamilton; which explains how this tract came to be found among the *Adversaria* of his friend. His acquaintance with the famous Single-Speech Hamilton commenced in 1760, with whom he lived in intimacy from that period to the time of his death. Mr Hamilton concurred with Lord Thurlow and Dr Brocklesby, in liberal offers of assistance, during his illness, which were declined. (See Boswell's Life, &c. vol. i. p. 409. vol. iv. p. 392; *Letters*, &c. vol. ii. p. 318, 342.) He died at his house, in Upper Brooke-street, 16th July 1796, in the 68th year of his age.

of penury, and arrived at the pinnacle of literary reputation.

His figure and manner are more generally known than those of almost any other man *. His person was large, robust, and unwieldy, from corpulency †. His countenance was coarse and rugged; and when composed, looked sluggish, yet awful and contemplative. His features, however, were capable of great expression, both of intelligence and mildness, when he was engaged in animated conversation, or under the influence of grateful feelings. He was near-sighted, and had the use of only one eye. His head shook, and his carriage was disfigured by sudden emotions, which appeared to a common observer to be

* Several pictures, which strongly resemble the original, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, a bust by Mr Nollekens, miniatures by Mr Humphry, Miss Reynolds, Mr Zoffanij; Mr Opie, and engravings by Heath, Hall, Trotter, Townley, &c. were the tributes of the artists to his public reputation.

† This circumstance is much overcharged. If he appeared a little unwieldy, it was owing to the defect of his sight, and not from corpulency.

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involuntary and convulsive; but, in the opinion of Sir Joshua Reynolds, they were the consequences of a depraved habit of accompanying his thoughts with certain untoward actions, which seemed as if they were meant to reprobate some part of his past conduct. Of his limbs, he is said never to have enjoyed the free and vigorous use. When he walked the streets, what with the constant roll of his head, and the concomitant motion of his body, he appeared to make his way by that motion, independent of his feet. His strength, however, was great, and his personal courage no less so. Among other instances which exemplify his possession of both, it is related, that, being once at the Lichfield theatre, he sat upon a chair placed for him beside the scenes. Having had occasion to quit his seat, he found it occupied, upon his return, by an innkeeper in the town. He civilly demanded that it should be restored to him; but meeting with a rude refusal, he laid hold of the chair, and with it of the intruder, and flung them both, without farther ceremony, into

the pit. At another time, having engaged in a scuffle with four men in the streets, he resolutely refused to yield to superior numbers, and kept them all at bay, till the watch came up, and carried him and his antagonists to the watch-house. When Mr Foote, in the wantonness of mimicry, had an intention of introducing the *Caliban of literature* upon the stage, after the detection of the Cock-lane Ghost, he was deterred from making the attempt by the threatened exertion of Johnson's prowess, in chastising him before the audience. In his dress he was singular and slovenly; and though he improved somewhat under the lectures of Mrs Thrale, during his long residence at Streatham, yet he was never able completely to surmount particularity. The exteriors of politeness were not among his attainments. He certainly wished to be polite; and the habit of mixing with polite company at Mr Thrale's, wore off, in some degree, the rugged points of his own scholastic character. His manners took a milder tone; but his civility still retained something uncouth and

harsh. He would sometimes do things inconsistent with the established modes of behaviour. He never wore a watch till he was sixty years of age, and then caused one to be made for him by Mudge and Dutton, which cost him seventeen guineas, with this inscription on the dial-plate, from the Greek Testament, "For the night cometh." He was fond of good company, and of good living; and to the last he knew of no method of regulating his appetites, but absolute restraint, or unlimited indulgence. "Many a day," says Mr Boswell, "did he fast; many a year refrain from wine; but when he did eat it was voraciously*; when he did drink it was copiously. He could practise abstinence, but not temperance." He loved late hours extremely; and indulged in the use of tea to an excess incompatible with the convenience and regularity of a well-

* This is extremely exaggerated. He ate heartily, having a good appetite, but not with the voraciousness described by Mr Boswell; all whose extravagant accounts must be read with caution and abatement.

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ordered family. But when he would have tea made at two o'clock in the morning, it was only that there might be a certainty of detaining his companions round him. In his conversation he was sometimes rude, and too often impatient of contradiction. Addicted to disputation, and greedy of victory, he was equally regardless of truth and fair reasoning in his approaches to conquest *. Tenacious of his own opinion, when it was in danger of being wrested from him by his adversary, he shewed such skill and dexterity in defence, that he either tired him out by apt illustration, or placed his argument in a ludicrous light, by the power of his wit and irony. "There is no arguing with him," says Goldsmith, alluding to a speech in one of Cibber's plays, "for if his pistol misses fire he knocks you

* He was fond of disputation, and willing to see what could be said on each side of the question, when a subject was argued. At all other times, no man had a more scrupulous regard for truth; from which, I verily believe, he would not have deviated to save his life.

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down with the but-end of it." In the early part of his life, he had been too much depressed; in his latter years, too much indulged. His temper had at first been soured by disappointment and penury; and his petulance was afterwards encouraged by universal submission. The habit of pronouncing decisions to his friends and visitors, gave him a dictatorial manner; which was much enforced by a voice naturally loud, and often overstrained. Yet, in his goodness of heart, and warmth of affection, his friends met with a recompence for that submission which the sovereignty of his genius challenged, and his temper exacted from them, to the uttermost. To great powers of reasoning, he united a perpetual and ardent desire to excel; and even in an argument on the most indifferent subject, he generally engaged with the whole force and energy of his great abilities. Of his conversation, it is true, all that has been retailed by Mr Boswell, does not seem to be worth recording. Judging of it most favourably, it shews the great range of his capacity,

the vigorous alacrity of his powerful mind, and his shining talents for wit and humour, in a striking light; but many things are told which ought to have been suppressed, such as seem to betray the pride of knowledge, the captiousness of disputation, and the vainglory of superior vigour, rather than accurate investigation, and sound and enlightened argument. Where he appears serious, we are not always sure that he speaks the sentiments of his conviction. Mr Boswell allows, that he often talked for victory, and sometimes took up the weaker side, as the most ingenious things could be said on it, for mere amusement and the pleasure of discussion. Truth, and the ablest defences of truth, are mixed with error, and the most ingenious glosses which sophistry could invent, or address enforce. Authors are exalted or depreciated, as the moment of hilarity or gloom was connected with the subject, or as the opinion of the speaker was adverse; and the whole is given as the sentiments of Johnson. Whatever he said, in a circle of disputants, is

known; and he is made answerable for saying what, perhaps, in the playfulness or pressure of colloquial debate, he never seriously thought *. If the promulgation of the casual expressions or opinions, whether of gaiety or asperity, could be strictly authorised, scarcely any colloquy could bear such promulgation,

* "It was only in large companies, at times when he was irritated by arrogance, and when all were treasuring up his decisions, that he talked for victory; but when his opinions were modestly asked by his friends in private, even by Boswell himself, who put questions to him which no one else had courage to do, we may be 'sure that he spoke the sentiments of his conviction;' and on these occasions he frequently became so eloquent, copious, and accurate, that he seemed reading a well written book. Johnson always preferred conversation to reading, though it were with the lowest mechanics; and he constantly listened to professional men with re-respect. His disputes were chiefly with those pretenders to that knowledge and science, of which he was himself at least equally qualified to judge."

M. Review, vol. xx. N. S. p. 21, 22.

The reviewer of the last edition of this narrative, in the respectable literary journal, from which this note is taken, will perceive the use that has been made of his candid and judicious observations, proceeding from personal knowledge, in revising the present edition.

without losing much of its original vivacity and grace.

With these defects, there was, however, scarcely a virtue of which he was not in principle possessed. He was humane, charitable, affectionate, and generous. In him there was not one ingredient that participated of vice. His most intemperate sallies were the effects of an irritable habit; he offended only to repent. Though the pride of science, and an independent spirit, made him, on some occasions, intolerant and overbearing, yet arrogance, obscenity, and impiety, were repressed in his company. To the warm and active benevolence of his heart, all his friends have borne testimony. "He had nothing," said Goldsmith, "of the bear, but his skin." Misfortune had only to form her claim, in order to found her right to the use of his purse, or the exercise of his talents. With advising others to be charitable he did not content himself. His house was an asylum for the unhappy beyond what a regard to personal convenience would have allowed; and his income

was distributed in the support of his inmates, and the relief of numberless dependents out of doors, to an extent greater than general prudence would have permitted *. The most honourable testimony to his moral and social character, is the cordial esteem of his friends and acquaintances. No man was more sincere and steady in his friendships †; and he was known to no man by whom his loss was not regretted. Another great feature of his mind was the love of independence. While he felt the strength of his own powers, he despised, except in one instance, pecuniary aid. His pension has been often mentioned, and subjected him to severe imputations. But let

* The very small portion of his income which he spent on himself, was calculated by his friends at seventy, or at most eighty pounds a-year, and he pretended to allow himself a hundred.

† He had the misfortune to offend old Mr Sheridan, for whom he had a sincere regard, by speaking slightingly of the pretensions of the orator and player to a pension of L.200 a-year. He sought a reconciliation, but Sheridan was implacable. Some coldness or misunderstanding seems, latterly, to have interrupted his friendly intercourse with the two Wartons, for which no reason is assigned.

those who, like Johnson, had no patrimony, who were not always willing to labour, and felt the constant recurrence of necessities, reject, without an adequate reason, an independent income, which left his sentiments free, and required neither the servility of adulation, nor the burden of service*. It is not uncommon to see a desire to be independent degenerate into avarice. Johnson did not feel it early, for his benevolence counteracted it; but he declined going to Italy when worth L.1500, besides his pension, because of the expence; and we see the surly dignity which formerly spurned at an obligation, relaxed, in his refusal of Dr Brocklesby's assistance, and Lord Thurlow's very delicate offer of the same kind. Some little censure is due to him for his easy faith, occasioned by his political pre-

* "Perhaps future historians will find no royal remuneration better bestowed during this long reign, than this pension, to a man of such splendid and useful abilities as Johnson, 'not for what he *was* to do, but for what he *had already done*.'

M. Review, vol. xx. N. S. p. 20.

judices, in the forgeries of Lauder. That he should have appeared in public in company with this defamer of Milton, is to be lamented; yet his renunciation of all connection with Lauder, when his forgeries were detected, is only a proof of his having believed (a common weakness of worthy minds) without examination, not that he was an accomplice with the impostor.

If there be any one trait by which his mind can be discriminated, it is gigantic vigour. In information and taste, he was excelled; but what he seriously attempted, he executed with that masterly, original boldness, which leaves us to regret his indolence, that he exerted himself only in the moment when his powers were wanting, and relapsed again into his literary idleness. He united in himself what are seldom united, a vigorous and excursive imagination with a strong and steady judgment. His memory was remarkably tenacious, and his apprehension wonderfully quick and accurate. He was rather a man of learning than of science. He had accumulated

a vast fund of knowledge, without much of system or methodical arrangement. His reading seems to have been casual, generally desultory. To conversation he owed much of his varied knowledge, and to his vigorous comprehensive powers, he was indebted for that clearness of distinction, that pointed, judicious discrimination, which elucidated every question, and astonished every hearer. From this casual reading he rose with a mind seldom fatigued; endowed with a clear, accurate perception, the variety of his studies relieved, without fatiguing or perplexing him; the ideas, arranged in order, were ready for use, adorned with all the energy of language, and the force of manner. But he required a strong impulse to bring all his powers into immediate action; and as he could excel others without great exertion, we seldom perceive his faculties brought forward in their full vigour. We scarcely see any attempt, beyond a periodical paper, which he did not professedly continue with lassitude and fatigue.

He deserves the character of a master of the Latin language; but it is easy to perceive that his acquaintance with Greek literature, was, what it is commonly supposed to be, general and superficial rather than curious or profound. Of natural science he knew but little; and most of his notions on that branch of philosophy were obsolete and erroneous. In his writings, he appears to have taken more from his own mind than from books; and he displays his learning, rather in allusions to the opinions of others than in the direct use of them. Criticism, metaphysical discussion, moral theory, systems of religion, and anecdotes of literature, were his favourite topics. Biography was his delight. General history he professed to disregard; yet his memory was so retentive, that we seldom find him at a loss upon any topic, ancient or modern.

From early prejudices, which all his philosophy and learning could never overcome, he was a zealous and scrupulous high-church man; following, to the uttermost tenet, the

notions of *Laud*, whose talents he has praised, and whose fate he has deplored, in his *Vanity of Human Wishes*. In his religious belief and practice, he was so much in earnest, and so punctual, that deviations from the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England were offensive to him. His partiality for the tenets of the Nonjurors, which he first imbibed, made him extremely charitable to the supererogation of the Catholics and Moravians; but for what he thought the indecent plainness of the Presbyterians and Dissenters, he had no reverence. Yet there were individuals among them whom he highly respected, such as Mr Baxter, Mr Grove, Dr Watts, Dr Robertson, Dr Blair, Dr Fordyce, Dr Rose, and several worthy ministers of the Church of Scotland, with whom he made acquaintance in his tour to the Hebrides. He was an orthodox churchman, without professing implicit submission to the doctrines of the church, where human opinion was mingled with divine revelation. His belief in the doctrines of the Trinity, resurrection, and atone-

ment, was strictly conformable to the Protestant creed *. His piety was perfectly sincere, and truly edifying; founded on the Christian scheme of redemption, at once rational and consolatory, combining justice and mercy in the Supreme Being, with the improvement of human nature. He did not consider the Calvinistic idea of passive recumbency on the merits of Christ, as founded on Scripture. He deemed obedience and repentance, such as we can perform, still necessary. "On this great duty eternity is suspended; and to him that refuses to practise it, the Throne of Mercy is inaccessible, and the Saviour of the world has been born in vain †." On controverted points of theology, however, he was never dogmatic, but communicated his ideas with awe and hesitation. He was well acquainted with the general evidences of Christianity, but he does not appear to have read the Bible with a critical

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. ii. p. 256. vol. iv. p. 96. 127.

† *Rambler*, No. 185.

eye, nor to have interested himself concerning the elucidation of obscure or difficult passages.

His benevolence embraced the whole race of man; but his very strong, and very devout mind was warped into a want of moderation and candour, in particular instances, by adopting the prejudices of a high-flown Tory, and, till the accession of his present Majesty, of a violent Jacobite. Bigoted as to a particular system of politics, he proclaimed his profound reverence for the monarchy and the hierarchy, by invectives against the Whigs, whom he accused of fettering the regal power by restrictions incompatible with the exercise of its salutary prerogatives, of making government impracticable, by allowing so much liberty to every man, that there remained not power enough to govern any man; and of weakening the influence of the clergy, founded on the opinion of mankind, by watching them with a narrow jealousy, and maintaining an indiscriminate toleration of all religions and all sects. Yet much of his abuse of the Whigs was more playful than malignant.

He never, it is true, would allow a Whig to be right on any occasion, and never spoke of King William but in harsh terms of reproach; yet he rejected the doctrine of the *divine right of kings*, and condemned the conduct of that weak and infatuated monarch, James II. as unwarrantable, and exceeding the bounds of moral obligation to lawful authority. Certainly, he loved Mr Burke and Mr Windham, who enlisted under the banner of the Whigs, and ranked among the leaders of that party, with a tenderness of affection, unembittered by the rancour of Toryism. It was his favourite maxim, "that the proper study of mankind is man;" and we must confess, that in all the departments of moral science his excellence is unrivalled. His acute penetration was constantly awake to "catch the manners living as they rise," and but few follies or peculiarities could escape his observation.

His habitual weaknesses, his failings, and his singularities, form a striking and melancholy contrast to the vigour of his understanding, and the keenness of his intuition

into common life. Though a sincere Christian, and a man of unblemished integrity and truth, yet his speculative opinions and reveries were tainted with prejudices and extravagancies almost too coarse and childish for the vulgar to imbibe. His attachment to the university of Oxford, to which, in his youth, he owed no great obligations, led him unjustly to depreciate the merit of every person who had studied at that of Cambridge *. His reverence and partiality for the Established Church, made him speak disparagingly of Presbyterians and Dissenters. His pretended aversion to Whigs, and his dislike to Scotland, and many more extravagancies of opinion that it would be painful to enumerate, inflamed his conversation, and influenced his conduct. He was so prone to superstition, that Mr Boswell relates, he made it a rule, that a particular foot should constantly make the first actual movement, when he came close to the threshold of any door or passage

* This was more affected than real. BISHOP PERCY.

which he was about to enter, or to quit *. He took off his hat, in token of reverence, when he approached the places on which Popish churches had formerly stood; and bowed before the monastic vestiges. His anxiety to ascertain the immateriality of the soul, and the doctrine of a future state, made him solicitous to give authenticity to stories of apparitions, and eager to credit the existence of second-sight †, while he appeared scrupulous and sceptical as to common facts. The universali-

* That he had some whimsical peculiarities of the nature here described, is certainly true; but there is no reason to believe they proceeded from any superstitious motives, wherein religion was concerned; they are rather to be ascribed to the "mental distempers" to which the author has alluded below, in the next page.

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"We not only doubt, but are able to dispute the fact. He had convulsive motions of the hands as well as of the feet, occasioned by St Vitus's dance; which, being involuntary, could not be ascribed to a superstitious arrangement of his steps."

M. Review, vol. xx. N. S. p. 22.

† The mysterious and troublesome faculty of *second-sight*, the manifestation of which Johnson sought to authenticate, may be compared with the eastern superstition of *second-hearing*, or *fore-hearing*, described by

ty of opinion in favour of spectral appearances, he was not willing to reject, and thought it not more strange that there should be evil spirits than evil men*. The same bias towards a belief in supernatural agency, led him to embrace the doctrine of demoniacal influence, and to give credit to the existence of witchcraft †. For all his prejudices and extravagancies we are unable to apologize. These are the shades of his character which it has been the business of satirical defamers to represent in the darkest colours. As it is necessary that a moral writer should be respected as well as admired, such representations can only gratify his enemies, and invalidate his valuable precepts. We could soften censure for many of his infirmities, by referring to the history

Lord Byron, from personal observation, in his admirable poem, "The Giaour."

"Deep in whose darkly-boding ear,
The death-shot peal'd of danger near."
p. 53. notes, p. 73. 8th edit.

* See Dr Ferriar's ingenious "Essay towards a theory of Apparitions," 8vo, 1813.

† Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, p. 33–4.

of his mind. These mental distempers, we observe, were the offspring of his melancholic temperament, and were fostered by solitary contemplation, till they had laid fetters upon his imagination too strong for reason to break through. We see it exerted in different circumstances, and expanding its gloomy influence, till at last it terminated little short of insanity. To this state we must attribute his voluntary penances, his unnecessary scruples, his wandering reveries, his constant fear of death, and his religious terrors, not very consistent with his strength of mind, or his conviction of the goodness of God*. This at least seems to have been his own opinion of the progress of these diseases, as appears from his history of the *Mad Astronomer* in *Rasselas*, and the picture of his own melancholy, irresolution, and lassitude,

* Something very similar was experienced by the German philosopher, Gellert; the same constitutional melancholy, the same fear of death, and the same support, at the end, in the sentiments and hopes of religion. See Life of Prof. Gellert, vol. i. p. 150. and Ernesti Opus. orat. tom. ii. p. 150.

drawn by himself, in the Latin poem Γνωθι σεαυτον, in strong and vivid colours, and copied by Mr Murphy, with equal spirit and fidelity.

"Care grows on care, and o'er my aching brain
Black Melancholy pours her morbid train:
No kind relief, no lenitive at hand;
I seek at midnight clubs the social band:
But midnight clubs, where wit with noise, conspires,
Where Comus revels, and where wine inspires,
Delight no more: I seek my lonely bed,
And call on sleep to soothe my languid head;
But sleep from these sad lids flies far away;
I mourn all night, and dread the coming day.
Exhausted, tir'd, I throw my eyes around,
To find some vacant spot on classic ground:
And soon, vain hope! I form a grand design,
Languor succeeds, and all my powers decline.

"Whate'er I plan, I feel my powers confin'd
By Fortune's frown and penury of mind.
I boast no knowledge glean'd with toil and strife,
The bright reward of a well acted life.
I view myself, while Reason's feeble light
Shoots a pale glimmer through the gloom of night.
While passions, error, phantoms of the brain,
And vain opinions, fill the dark domain;
A dreary void, where fears with grief combin'd
Waste all within, and desolate the mind *."

* Essay, &c. p. 84–5.

But let us turn from these foibles and singularities, which shew him weaker than the generality of his fellow men, and point to those perfections of mind, which prove him to have been of a rank so much above them. Looking back, as from an eminence, let us survey the venerable writer, moving in his own elevated sphere, as the great master of reason, the sovereign arbiter of literary taste, and the majestic teacher of moral wisdom.

As an author, Johnson is to be considered in the multifarious characters which he assumed, of a *philologist*, a *biographer*, a *critic*, an *essayist*, a *bibliographer*, a *commentator*, a *novelist*, a *journalist of travels*, a *political writer*, an *epistolary writer*, a *theologian*, and a *poet*.

On his *Dictionary of the English Language*, the imperishable monument of his philological fame, it is unnecessary to accumulate observations: it is in every body's hands; its utility is universally acknowledged; and its popularity is the most unerring test of its value. But the lexicography of a living language is necessarily imperfect; and, as might be

expected, in the space of fifty years, a more accurate theory of the origin of speech, and a more ample investigation of Teutonic literature, have discovered many errors and omissions in this stupendous effort of individual diligence. The collection of words in the vocabulary of the vernacular language, though copious, is incomplete; and the etymologies, though they exhibit learning and judgment, are not entitled to unqualified praise *. But our great lexicographer's ignorance of the philosophy of language, and of the radical knowledge of etymology, was not the fault of his own negligence; for the principles of English grammar, in the progress of philological learning, had not attained, in any considerable degree, systematic correctness, consistency, and truth, in his time. It is to the sagacity and ingenuity of Horne Tooke, that an entire revolution has been effected, within the last twenty years, in the theory of grammar, and a new track opened to the lexicographer.

* These were chiefly given as he found them in former publications. BISHOP PERCY.

Johnson's imperfect knowledge of the northern dialects, disqualified him, in some measure, for surveying clearly the foundations of our language; and his partiality for classical literature, led him to prefer that division of the language which came in with the Norman, and is derived from the Latin. Thus the northern term *Firth*, signifying *a deep inlet of the sea*, is erroneously written *Frith*, a derivation from the Latin *Fretum*, *a strait*, of which the meaning is obviously different. The definitions of words exhibit astonishing proofs of acuteness of intellect and precision of language. A few of them must be admitted to be loose, pedantic, and erroneous. Thus *Windward* and *Leeward*, though directly of opposite meaning, are defined identically the same way. The definition of *Net-work* has been often quoted with sportive malignity, as obscuring a thing in itself very plain. But words less abstruse than that which is to be defined, cannot always be found. The change of easier words into harder, as *Burial* into *Sepulture* or *Interment*, is unavoidable; for the

easiest word, whatever it be, can never be translated into one more easy. The obtrusion of his own opinions, and even prejudices, into the definitions of *Tory*, *Whig*, *Pension*, *Oats*, *Excise*, *Alias*, and a few more words, cannot be fully defended, and must be placed to the account of capricious and humorous indulgence. The examples and authorities subjoined to the definitions, are chiefly collected, with due reverence, from the writers of the time of Queen Elizabeth, and the period preceding the Restoration, whose works he justly regarded as *the wells of English undefiled*, as the pure sources of genuine diction. But his partiality for the Anglo-Latin phraseology of Sir Thomas Browne, and other favourite names, is liable to some censure, as it has augmented his vocabulary with a number of polysyllabic words, which might be spared. The adjustment of the orthography of words has removed a reproach from our language, by nearly fixing the unsettled and fortuitous modes of spelling, on the stable principles of etymology and analogy. So irresistible is the

weight of truth and reason, that few appeals have yet been made from the decisions of the *English Dictionary*, by the wantonness of caprice, or the vanity of petty reformation *. The plan possesses the undoubted merit of being unexceptionable, but the performance is, in many respects, objectionable. Much has been done; but the partial estimate of

* The principles upon which the orthoepy of our language is founded, have been established by Mr Sheridan in his elaborate "Dictionary of the English Language," in 2 vols. 4to, 1780; and some improvements have been made on the subject by Archdeacon Nares, in a perspicuous and systematic arrangement of the externals of the English language, entitled, "Elements of Orthoepy; containing a distinct view of the whole analogy of the English Language, so far as it relates to pronunciation, accent, and quantity, 8vo, 1784. A comprehensive and judicious analysis of the English Language, combining the principles of grammar and composition, was given to the world by Mr Lindley Murray, entitled, "English Grammar, adapted to the different classes of learners," &c. 8vo. 1795, of which the public approbation has been so general, and the circulation so extensive, that a copy of the 14*th edition* is now before the present writer, a token of the friendship of the amiable and excellent author, whose delicate and correct taste is only subordinate to the purity and benevolence of his mind.

the value of authorities, the useless subdivisions of meanings, the misarrangement of the proper and metaphorical significations, the exclusive adoption of Latin polysyllables, and the innumerable omissions of technical and provincial words, make us regret the inferiority of the performance to our opinion of the strength that undertakes it. The failure is manifest; but where perfection is unattainable, miscarriage is without disgrace; and the honour is indisputable of his having done that, which nobody has done well, better than others. In the *Preface*, the most eloquent production of his pen, the lexicographer modestly allows, that "he has not always executed his own scheme, or satisfied his own expectations." The imperfection of all human labour precluded the possibility of attaining speculative perfection. Yet the defects which are discoverable in the fabric of the *English Dictionary*, though they depreciate its authority as a standard, do not detract from the just fame of Johnson, in constructing the only capital work of the kind in the language, and

the only solid foundation of the preparations that are making to complete, without superseding, his excellent scheme *.

As a *biographer*, his merit, as we have already observed, is of the highest kind. This instructive branch of literature was very happily adapted to his manly cast of thought, and sagacity of research into the human character. The English language, enriched though it be, by the biographies of Sprat, Burnet, Middleton, Birch, Jortin, Campbell, Kippis, and others, does not afford compositions in which the Lives of eminent men are discussed with more acuteness of observation, depth of reflection, felicity of illustration, and vigour of expression. The

* The Rev. H. J. Todd, the learned illustrator of Milton and Spenser, among others, is preparing for publication, a new edition of the *English Dictionary*, in which he proposes to enlarge the vocabulary with many thousand useful and impressive words, to correct numerous etymologies, to rectify some mistaken references or imperfect citations, and to produce examples to many words which want illustration, as well as to others which require additional authority.

specimens of this species of composition, which he contributed to the periodical miscellanies, are interesting as individual portraits, and admirable as vehicles of many valuable reflections on life and manners. His narration, in general, is vigorous, connected, and perspicuous; and his reflections are numerous, apposite, and moral. Sometimes, indeed, his colourings receive a tinge from prejudice, and his judgment is insensibly warped by the particularity of his private opinions. These observations apply to the *Life of Savage*, the most finished of his biographical compositions, and the *Lives* of *Browne, Boerhaave, Drake, Frederick king of Prussia*, and other eminent men, printed in the "Gentleman's Magazine," "Universal Visitor," and "Literary Magazine."

The *Lives of the Poets*, a more ample and important accession to biography and criticism, have obtained a greater share of popularity, and excited a larger portion of praise. The accession to *criticism* will receive a distinct consideration in another place. If these com-

positions be regarded merely as narrations of the lives and delineations of the characters of the several poets, the representation of traditionary facts, and discriminative opinions concerning them, is sometimes deficient in intelligence, and sometimes tinged with the hues of prejudice; but if they be considered as pieces of elegant and nervous writing, pregnant with valuable detached reflections, apt and luminous illustrations, nice and profound discussions, and a variety of curious incidental information, they are not surpassed, in merit and value, by any compositions of the kind, in ancient or modern times. In regard to the few instances in which he has been misled by partial or wrong information, it is necessary to consider, that though, with more diligence, he might have obtained more intelligence, yet the facts are related according to the best of his knowledge; and, in the investigation of uncertain tradition, doubtful anecdote, and vague report, it will be recollected, that he was guided by a rigid adherence to the sacred principle of truth, which no consideration

would have prevailed on him to violate. It belonged to Langbaine, Oldys, and Coxeter, and to men like them, to trace the succession of facts, in this minute kind of history, with laborious diligence, for which let them take their due share of praise, and rest contented. It remained to Johnson to examine the collections of his predecessors, by the rules of historical evidence, and, rising to the highest function of biography, the instruction of mankind, to display the happy art of moralization, by which he gives to well-known incidents the grace of novelty and the force of example. These observations apply especially to the *Lives* of the legitimate and established poets, *Cowley*, *Milton*, *Butler*, *Waller*, *Dryden*, *Addison*, and *Pope*, not only for their pre-eminence in length and elaboration, but for the striking features which they display of originality of thought, acuteness of investigation, perspicuity of arrangement, and felicity of expression. From the general excellence of these biographies, unquestionably the most valuable and instructive of their kind, something

is to be deducted for the influence of party-prejudice, and religious and literary bigotry, in his representation of the characters, and his decisions on the literary merit of men of opposite political and religious opinions, and of a different poetical school. Of the abettors of reformation in Church or State, however constitutional, Johnson, it is well known, was a zealous opponent; and of the innovators in poetry, of the most beautiful fancy and sublime genius, though his mind was too great to be jealous, he was a severe judge. In the biography of *Waller*, particularly, he charges Hampden with being "the zealot of rebellion," forgetting that he himself becomes a partisan by this charge. His vehement prejudices are most observable in the biography of *Milton*, whose public life he viewed with abhorrence, and whose moral and domestic conduct he has pourtrayed in a harsh, gloomy, and hostile colouring *. Collectively, however, his bio-

* The last biographer of our great poet has represented him, in bold and glowing colours, as "a man in whom were illustriously combined all the qualities that

graphies, when every deduction is made which candour and impartiality require, display the great powers of his mind in their full blaze and vigour; and though the subjects on which they are employed may not always be thought worthy of their utmost exertion, yet his sagacity, shrewdness, and knowledge of life, are never employed on any subject, without discovering some new truth, or latent peculiarity, unobserved before; and the strength and elegance of the style, the richness, clearness, and poignancy of the narration, and the pure morality inculcated in every page, will

could adorn or could elevate the nature to which he belonged; a man who at once possessed beauty of countenance, symmetry of form, elegance of manners, benevolence of temper, magnanimity and loftiness of soul, the brightest illumination of intellect, knowledge the most various and extended, virtue that never loitered in her career, nor deviated from her course; a man who, if he had been delegated as the representative of his species to one of the superior worlds, would have suggested a grand idea of the human race, as of beings affluent in moral and intellectual treasure, raised and distinguished in the universe as the favourites and heirs of heaven." Symmons's Life of Milton, p. 526.

ever recommend them to the study and admiration of succeeding generations.

As a *critic*, he is entitled to the praise of being the greatest that our nation has produced. He has not, like his predecessors of the ancient school of criticism, tried merely to learn the art and not to feel it*. He has not

* In the progress of critical literature, in our nation, Wilson's "Arte of Rhetorike," the earliest composition of the kind deserving of notice, made its appearance in 1553, and was followed by Puttenham's "Arte of English Poesie," 1559; Harrington's "Apologie of Poetrie," 1591; Sidney's "Defense of Poesie," 1595; Campion's "Observations on the Arte of English Poesie," 1602; Daniel's "Defence of Rhyme," 1603; Bolton's "Hypercritica," 1617, (printed in 1722); Jonson's "Discoveries," 1640; Dryden's "Essay on Dramatic Poesie," 1667; Rymer's "Essays on Tragedy," &c.; Dennis's "Remarks on Prince Arthur, Grounds of Criticism on Poetry," &c. 1696; Addison's "Essays in the Spectator," &c. 1714; Spence's "Essay on Pope's Odyssey," 1728; Hurd's "Essay on Poetical Imitation," 1751; Warton's "Essay on the Genius of Pope," 1756; and Kames's "Elements of Criticism," 1763. The science of criticism seems to have been indebted to the writers of the ancient school for little more than systematic divisions, seldom profitable, and historical illustrations, often valuable. Sidney and Jonson are

gone to Aristotle or to Quintilian, to Dacier or to Bossu, to borrow rules to fetter genius by example, and impart distinctions which lead to no end; but, possessed of two qualities, without which a critic is no more than a caviller, strong sense, and an intimate knowledge of human nature, he has followed his own judgment, unbiassed by authority, and has adopted all the good sense of Aristotle, untrammelled by his forms. With a mind ardent and comprehensive, acute and penetrating, furnished with a large portion of the learning of ancient and modern times, he possesses that power of sympathetic genius which is capable of being fired by the contemplation of excellence, and that peculiar combination of sensibility and judgment upon

evidently of a superior class. Scarcely any writer of the modern school, w o preceded Johnson, is entitled to stand in the foremost rank, except Dryden, Addison, Spence, Hurd, and Warton, indisputably of the first order. The illustrators of ancient English literature, Warburton, Tyrwhitt, Percy, &c. have contributed incidentally to the improvement of English criticism.

which the sagacity of critical discernment depends. Without an exclusive reliance on the frigid distinctions of the French school, he supports the decisions of his own fervid philosophical mind, by the authority of the great masters of antiquity, and founds the science of criticism on the basis of Nature, and draws the principles of invention, and the rules of fine writing, from dispositions inherent in the mind of man. This praise he has merited by the *Preface to Shakespeare*, as we have already observed, a master-piece of dramatic criticism, partaking of that blaze of genius which it is employed in illustrating; and the detached pieces of criticism dispersed among his papers in the *Rambler* *,

* *On Pastoral Poetry*, Nos. 36, 37; *on the Dignity and Usefulness of Biography*, No. 60.; *on the Versification of Milton*, Nos. 86, 88, 90, 92, 94.; *on the Prejudices and Caprices of Criticism*, No. 93.; *on the Vanity of Authors, and the Neglect of good Authors*, No. 106.; *on Imitation*, No. 121.; *on the English Historians*, No. 122.; *Critique on Sampson Agonistes*, Nos. 13, 140.; *on the Criterions of Plagiarism*, No. 143.; *on Epistolary Writing*, No. 152. *on Dramatic Laws*,

Adventurer *, and *Idler* †, containing short discussions, often full and satisfactory, on a variety of interesting topics of literature, characterised by solidity and poignancy of remark, and energy and elegance of style. But his critical powers shine with more concentrated radiance in the *Lives of the Poets*. Of

No. 156.; *on the Fallacy and Uncertainty of Critical Rules*, No. 158.; *on the Debasement of Poetry by mean Expressions*, No. 168.; *on Labour as necessary to Excellence*, No. 169.; *on the various Degrees of Critical Perspicacity*, No. 176.

* *On the Presumption of Modern Criticism*, No. 58. *on the Pastorals of Virgil*, No. 92.; *An Apology for apparent Plagiarism*, No. 95.; *on the Utility of Authors*, No. 137.

† *On the Cause of the Neglect of Books*, No. 59.; *on the Progress of Arts and Languages*, No. 63.; *on Posthumous Works*, No. 65.; *on the Loss of Ancient Writings*, No. 66.; *on the History of Translations*, No. 69.; *on Hard Words*, No. 70.; *on Easy Writing*, No. 77.; *on the Best Method of Writing Biography*, No. 84.; *on Compilations*, No. 85.; *on the Sufficiency of the English Language*, No. 91.; *on the Narratives of Travellers*, No. 97.

To the above list may be referred the *Preface* to "The Preceptor," and the critical papers in the Magazines and Reviews, enumerated in the preceding pages.

these compositions, it is scarcely hyperbolical to affirm, that many passages are executed with all the skill and penetration of Aristotle, and animated and embellished with all the fire and imagination of Longinus. His remarks on the works of the several poets, upon which he sits as a judge, however in some instances controvertible, abound in strong and just decisions, and forcible and familiar illustrations, established, it would seem, rather by the specific application of the general rules of philosophical criticism to particular instances, than by an elaborate explication of the sources of the pleasure received from poetical composition, by deductions from metaphysical principles in human nature *. These observations apply, more particularly, to the remarks on the works of *Cowley*, *Milton*, *Butler*, *Waller*, *Dryden*, *Addison*, *Pope*, *Thomson*, and *Young*,

* See "Essays on the Sources of the Pleasures received from Literary Compositions," 2d edit. 8vo, 1813, the production of a judicious and eloquent writer, combining purity of taste, and depth of sensibility, with the most amiable and interesting morality.

which are distinguished by superior elegance, copiousness, and strength, and exhibit the noblest specimens of entertaining and solid criticism that ancient or modern times have produced. The criticism on the compositions of *Cowley*, almost the last, and undoubtedly the best of the *metaphysical poets* of the seventeenth century, must be allowed the full merit of copiousness and originality. The dissertation on the style and sentiments of this kind of writing, which was borrowed from Marino, and his followers, and recommended by the example of Donne, and his immediate successors, Jonson, Suckling, and Cleiveland, has all the attraction of novelty as well as sound observation. False wit is detected in all its fantastic shapes, and the taste for forced, unnatural conceits, far-sought sentiments, low allusions, vulgar expressions, and harsh and uncouth diction, is exploded, never, it is hoped, to debase again, noble imagery, sterling wit, and strong sense. The "Paradise Lost" is a poem which the mind of *Milton* only could have produced; the criticism

upon it is a splendid and eloquent composition, which, perhaps the pen of Johnson only could have written. "Considered with respect to design," he claims for it "the first place, and with respect to performance, the second, among the productions of the human mind;" and, in passing final sentence, pronounces it, "not the greatest of heroic poems only, because it is not the first;" being superior or inferior to "The Iliad," as design and performance are to be comparatively rated. The poem of "Hudibras" is closely allied to the honour of our nation, "as the images which it exhibits are domestic, the sentiments unborrowed, and the strain of diction original and peculiar;" and the pride which we assume, as the countrymen of *Butler*, is gratified by confronting him with Cervantes and Rabelais, and appropriating those honours which his native wit, humour, and learning have an undoubted right to share. The dissertation, in the *Life of Waller*, on the unfitness of poetry for the awful subjects of religion, in opposition to many anthorities, has

the merit of originality, and forcible reasoning. "Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. Man admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer. The employments of pious meditation, are faith, thanksgiving, repentance, and supplication. Faith, invariably uniform, cannot be invested by fancy with decorations. Thanksgiving, the most joyful of all holy effusions, yet addressed to a Being without passions, is confined to a few modes, and is to be felt rather than expressed. Repentance, trembling in the presence of the Judge, is not at leisure for cadences and epithets. Supplication of man to man may diffuse itself through many topics of persuasion; but supplication to God can only cry for mercy. Of sentiments purely religious, it will be found, that the most simple expression is the most sublime. The ideas of Christian theology are too simple for eloquence, too sacred for fiction, and too majestic

for ornament." In the bold, and highly-finished character of *Dryden*, "the great high priest of all the Nine," and "the father of English criticism," some of the discriminating features of his own character are recognisable. "The power that predominated in his intellectual operations was rather strong reason than quick sensibility. Upon all occasions that were presented, he studied rather than felt, and produced sentiments, not such as nature enforces, but meditation supplies. With the simple and elemental passions, as they spring separate in the mind, he seems not much acquainted; he is, therefore, with all his variety of excellence, not often pathetic, and had so little sensibility of the power of effusions purely natural, that he did not esteem them in others." On the excellencies of *Addison*, his predecessor essayist, he lavishes the honours of literary applause, with a liberality which far transcends all praise. "Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar, but not coarse, and elegant, but not ostentatious, must give his

days and his nights to the volumes of Addison." Of those poets who rank in the highest class after Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, *Dryden* is generally allowed to be the first; but his claim to that distinction is at least rendered doubtful by the pretensions of *Pope*, whose compositions are, perhaps, a greater accession to English literature than those of any other modern poet. To regulate the scale by which the comparative merit of poetical pretensions is to be estimated, is one of the most difficult undertakings of criticism. This is attempted in the parallel between *Dryden* and *Pope*, the disciple of *Dryden*, which challenges Quintilian's estimate of Demosthenes and Cicero, and rivals the finest specimens of critical acuteness and elegant composition in the English language *. The genius

* A parallel upon a more extensive scale is given by Dr Warton, in his "Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope;" in which the poetical qualifications of "the great poet of reason, the first of ethical authors in verse," and "his great master," are as candidly examined as they are judiciously discriminated.

of *Thomson* is estimated with ample justice; and the critique on "The Seasons" presents us with an idea of legitimate poetry, recommended by the utmost felicity of imagery and expression. "He looks round on Nature and on Life, with the eye which Nature bestows only on a poet; the eye that distinguishes, in every thing presented to its view, whatever there is on which imagination can delight to be detained; and with a mind that at once comprehends the vast, and attends to the minute. The gaiety of Spring, the splendour of Summer, the tranquillity of Autumn, and the horror of Winter, take, in their turns, possession of the mind. The poet leads us through the appearances of things, as they are successively varied by the vicissitudes of the year, and imparts to us so much of his own enthusiasm, that our thoughts expand with his imagery, and kindle with his sentiments." The decision of impartial criticism is pronounced on the poems of *Young*; and a very just and glowing encomium is bestowed on the noblest and most durable monu-

ment of his genius and virtue "In his 'Night Thoughts' he has exhibited a very wide display of original poetry, variegated with deep reflections and striking allusions; a wilderness of thought, in which the fertility of fancy scatters flowers of every hue and of every odour. This is one of the few poems in which blank verse could not be changed for rhyme, with advantage. The excellence of this work is not exactness, but copiousness; particular lines are not to be regarded; the power is in the whole; and in the whole there is a magnificence like that ascribed to Chinese plantations—the magnificence of vast extent and endless diversity."

Some caution, however, is required to peruse these admirable compositions with advantage. The present writer means not to say that they are perfect, or that, on the whole, they are executed with propriety. Judging of his decrees, as the arbiter of taste, most favourably, he is compelled to with-hold from the British Longinus, gifted though he be

"with a poet's fire," the unqualified praise of his illustrious prototype;

"An ardent judge, who, zealous in his trust,
With warmth gives sentence, yet is always just."*

Johnson, as he has had occasion to remark, in reviewing his judgments of the several poets who have fallen under his consideration †, brought to the production of this work ideas already formed, opinions tinctured with his usual hues of party and prejudice, and the rigid unfeeling philosophy, which could neither bend to excuse failings, nor judge of what was not capable of a dispassionate disquisition. To think for himself in critical, as in all other matters, is a privilege to which every one is undoubtedly entitled. This privilege of critical independence, an affectation of singularity, or some other principle not immediately visible, is frequently be-

* Essay on Criticism.

† In the "Works of the British Poets," &c. where this narrative was originally prefixed to the poems of Johnson, vol. xi.

traying into a dogmatical spirit of contradiction to received opinion. Of this there need no further proofs than his almost unfirm attempt to depreciate the writers of blank verse, and his degrading estimate of the compositions of *Prior*, *Gay*, *Hammond*, *Shenstone*, *Akenside*, *Collins*, and *Dyer*. In his judgments of these poets he may be justly accused of being influenced by prejudice, resolutely blind to merit. The effect of the vigorous act of justice which he performed to *Milton* is weakened, by his pronouncing "Paradise Lost" "an object of forced admiration; one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again." In his derogatory estimate of "Lycidas," that "surely no man could have fancied that he read it with pleasure, had he not known the author;" and of "Comus," that "it is inelegantly splendid, and tediously instructive;" he has widely dissented from the opinion of the votaries of creative fancy, and of genuine poetry. His rigorous condemnation of *Gray*, and his fastidious judgment of

Shenstone, have drawn down upon him the united censures of those who admire poetry in her most daring attitudes, and gorgeous attire, and those who are pleased with her modest beauties, most humble steps, and least adorned guise. In the strictures on the "Ode on Eton College," and "the two Sister Odes," he is captious, hypercritical, and puerile. When he condemns the poet's "supplication to father Thames, to tell him who drives the hoop or tosses the ball," because "father Thames has no better means of knowing than himself;" and when he compares the abrupt beginning of "The Bard," to the ballad of "Johnny Armstrong," "*Is there ever a man in all Scotland*," he descends to the last degree of puerility*. In the remarks on the "Pastoral Ballad," he "regrets that it is pastoral," and "sickens

* This minute kind of criticism on Gray, which even Homer himself could not stand, produced an elegant and classical attack on Johnson, in a professed imitation of his style and manner, entitled, "A Criticism on the Elegy written in a Country Church-Yard; being a Continuation of Dr J———n's Criticism on the Poems of

at the mention of the *crook*, the *pipe*, the *sheep*, and the *kids*." He observes of *Shenstone*, that "he had little value for those parts of knowledge which he had not himself cultivated." His own taste of poetry seems, in some degree, regulated by a similar standard; method, ratiocination, argument, and lofty and vigorous declamation in harmonious verse, of which he himself was capable, often obtaining his regard and commendation; while the bold and enthusiastic, though, perhaps,

Gray," 8vo, 1783. Of this exquisite *jeu d'esprit*, the avowed production of Professor Young of Glasgow, Johnson speaks with apparent indifference, in a letter to Mrs Thrale. "Of the imitation of my style in a criticism on Gray's church-yard Elegy, I forgot to make mention. The author, I believe, is entirely unknown, for Mr Steevens cannot hunt him out. I know little of it; for, though it was sent me, I never cut the leaves open. I had a letter with it, representing it to me as my own work. In such an account, to the public there may be humour, but to myself it was neither serious nor comical. I suspect the writer to be wrong-headed. As to the noise it makes, I never heard it; and am inclined to believe that few attacks, either of ridicule or invective, make much noise, but by the help of those that they provoke." *Letters*, &c. vol. ii. p. 289.

irregular flights of imagination, are passed by with obstinate and perverse indifference. His highest admiration scarcely goes beyond *Dryden* and *Pope*, who, sometimes, indeed, "wandered in Fancy's maze," but aimed chiefly at elegant correctness, and brilliant sententiousness. The sublime conceptions, and daring flights of the votaries of pure poetry, he seems rather to have seen than felt. It is not then to be wondered at, that the panegyrist of *Pomfret* and *Blackmore* should with-hold from *Collins* and *Gray* the commendation he has bestowed on *Savage* and *Yalden;* that his feelings vibrated not to the delicate touches of *Shenstone* and *Hammond*, nor to the stronger hand of *Akenside;* and that his praises of almost the whole class of pastoral, lyric, and descriptive poets are parsimoniously bestowed, and too frigid to make an impression. This is to be attributed to the natural turn of his mind, and to the bent which his feelings had received from the habits of his life. Poetry pleases only as it is the image of reality. He who has never de-

lighted in the silent beauties of creation, can feel no emotions as they are reflected to him in description. Johnson had no taste for the variegated face of Nature. The trees of the forest, the flowers of the valley, *speluncæ, vivique lacus*, the crags of the rock, and the mazes of the rivulet, had no charms for him. Accustomed to dogmatize in his study, and swelter in some alley in the city, he never throbbed with poetic thrills as Nature expanded her rural glories to his eye. He preferred the dust of Fleet-street, or the windings of the Strand, to the air of Hampstead, or the beauties of Greenwich. *

* Johnson was so extremely short-sighted, that he had no conception of rural beauties; and, therefore, it is not to be wondered, that he should prefer the conversation of the metropolis to the silent groves and views of Greenwich; which, however delightful, he could not see. In his Tour through the Highlands of Scotland, he has somewhere observed, that one mountain was like another; so utterly unconscious was he of the wonderful variety of sublime and beautiful scenes those mountains exhibited. The writer of this remark was once present when the case of a gentleman was mentioned, who, having with great taste and skill formed the lawns and

One general remark may be ventured upon here: through the whole of his criticisms, the desire to praise, except in the case of some very favourite poet, is almost always overpowered by the disposition to censure; and while beauties are passed over "with the neutrality of a stranger and the coldness of a critic," the slightest blemish is examined with microscopical sagacity. The truth of this remark is particularly obvious when he descends to his contemporaries; for whom he appears to have had little more brotherly kindness than they might have expected at Constantinople. This could not arise from envy, in one so much above the generality of mankind,

plantations about his house into most beautiful landscapes, to complete one part of the scenery, was obliged to apply for leave, to a neighbour with whom he was not upon cordial terms; when Johnson made the following remark, which at once shews what ideas he had of landscape improvement, and how happily he applied the most common incidents to moral instruction. "See how inordinate desires enslave a man! No desire can be more innocent than to have a pretty garden, yet, indulged to excess, it has made this poor man submit to beg a favour of his enemy." BISHOP PERCY.

but may reasonably be imputed to fastidiousness of judgment, and consciousness of the value of praise from the first critic of the nation. The present writer is under no apprehension of being charged with an unjustifiable partiality in this opinion of him, by those who know his disposition and the habits of his life. All that is great and genuinely good in Johnson has had no warmer encomiast. He has uniformly praised his genius, his learning, his good sense, the strength of his reasonings, the sagacity of his critical decisions, the happiness of his illustrations, and the animation and energy of his style; and he makes no scruple to declare, that though there are many opinions erroneous, and many observations improper, his *Lives of the Poets* are such as no one but himself could have executed, and in which he will not be followed with success.

As an *essayist*, his periodical papers in the *Rambler*, *Adventurer*, and *Idler*, are distinguished from those of other writers who have derived celebrity from similar publications. He has neither the wit nor the grace-

ful ease of Addison, nor does he shine with the humour and classic suavity of Goldsmith. His powers are of a more grave, energic, and dignified kind, than those of any of his competitors; and if he entertains us less he instructs us more. He shews himself master of all the recesses of the human mind; able to detect vice, when disguised in her most specious form; and equally possessed of a corrosive to eradicate, or a lenitive to assuage the follies and sorrows of the heart. Virtuous in his object, just in his conceptions, strong in his arguments, and powerful in his exhortations, he arrests the attention of levity by the luxuriance of his imagery, and magnificence of his diction; while he awes detected guilt into submission, by the majesty of his declamation, and the sterling weight of his opinions. His step is vigorous and full of dignity; his demeanour manly and impressive. But his genius is only formed to chastise graver faults, which require to be touched with an heavier hand. He could not chase away such lighter foibles as buzz in our ears in society, and fret the feelings of our less important

hours. His gigantic powers were able to prepare the immortal path to heaven, but could not stoop to decorate our manners with these lesser graces which make life amiable. Johnson, at such a task, was Hercules at the distaff, a lion coursing a mouse, or an eagle stooping at a fly.

These observations apply, more particularly, to his papers in the *Rambler*, on which a large share of his reputation is founded, as the great moral teacher of his countrymen. The *Rambler*, as we have already observed, possesses a peculiar and distinctive character; the predominant vigour and originality of its style and manner, the excellence of the instruction which it inculcates, and the perpetual delight which it inspires on moral and religious themes. A vein of deep morality, unrivalled grandeur and originality of thought, weight and elevation of sentiment, acuteness and solidity of observation, richness and splendour of illustration, and vigour and comprehensiveness of language, distinguish the precepts, and dignify the expression. So pure and impressive are

the precepts of practical virtue, and so acute and instructive are the observations on life and manners, that no mind can be thought very deficient that has, by constant study and meditation, assimilated to itself all that may be found there. Though instruction be its predominant purpose, yet the gravity of preceptive wisdom is enlivened with a considerable portion of literary criticism, allegorical and oriental fiction, the delineation of character, and the exhibition of humour. The papers professedly serious, form an entire system of practical ethics, above all praise; the critical investigations display much sagacity and sound judgment; the tales, the most brilliant and active fancy; and the characteristic delineations, a great share of originality. Of the serious papers, the purest precepts of virtue, and the most important duties of religion, may be drawn from Nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, 17, 28, 29, 32, 47, 48, 50, 52, 54, 57, 64, 68, 71, 72, 77, 78, 87, 110, 114, 134, 137, 148, 149, 155, 167, and 203; and Nos. 19, 34, 46, 51, 59, 61, 62, 73, 82, 107, 113, 115, 117, 123,

138, 157, 161, 177, 179, 182, 192, 197, 198, and 200, may be appealed to for instances of original humour, characteristic delineation, and delicate irony. The *visions* and *allegories* in Nos. 3, 22, 33, 67, 91, 96, 102, and 105, and the *oriental tales* in Nos. 38, 65, 120, 190, 204, and 205, possess all the attractions of the most beautiful creations of fancy, impregnated with the most alluring instruction, clothed with a profusion of the most splendid imagery.

The sentence of the public has placed the *Rambler*, where it ought to be, among the select writings of that class, next in rank to "The Spectator;" to which, though widely different in dramatic contrivance, it is as much superior in force of argument, and splendour of eloquence, as it is inferior in unaffected ease, and elegant simplicity. Admirably as the noblest precepts of religion and morality are enforced by the weight of solid sense, and the energy of dignified composition, the same elaborate phraseology and dignity of expression are misapplied to the light and familiar topics of a popular essay. The influ-

ence of constitutional disposition is visible in the solemnity, and general sameness of the topics of instruction, and in the melancholy and discouraging views of human life, exhibited as a state in which misery predominates. "Our state may be more or less embittered, as our duration may be more or less extended; yet the utmost felicity which we can ever attain will be little more than an alleviation of misery; and we shall always feel more pain from our wants than pleasure from our enjoyments *." The evils of our situation, exaggerated by the querulousness of despondency, are too remote from reality to carry us along with the representation, to induce a sympathetic melancholy, to paralise the arm of industry, to suppress rational wishes, and to check the activity of well-founded hope. Human life, through all its vicissitudes, presents many alleviations of suffering, many intervals of ease and comfort, many rewards of honourable exertion, and many incite-

* *Rambler*, No. 165.

ments to rational hope and virtuous perseverance.

His papers in the *Adventurer* manifest the peculiar excellencies of those we have commented upon; the same moral and religious tendency, with less effort of language; the same descriptions of life, enlivened with more humour and irony; and the same amusement of the imagination, with an abatement of the gloomy grandeur and "dolorous declamation" of the *Rambler*.

The serious papers in the *Idler*, as we have already observed, though inferior to those in the *Rambler* in sublimity and splendour, are distinguished by the same dignified morality and solemn philosophy, and promote the same benevolent purpose—the diffusion of wisdom, virtue, and happiness. Among the papers deserving selection, as examples of intense thinking and impressive instruction *, the concluding paper, *On the Horror of the Last*, is remarkable for

* See page 264.

depth of reflection, and awful solemnity. The humorous papers are sportive, light, and lively, and more in the manner of Addison.

As a *bibliographer*, it is unnecessary to enlarge on his high qualifications, as the *Bibliotheca Harleiana*, and the *Harleian Miscellany*, remain a noble monument of his very accurate and extensive knowledge of books, and his very extraordinary skill and facility in classification and arrangement. His own opinion of the great utility of such memorials of learning, sanctioned by the judgment of the public *, may serve to justify the application of his talents to an employment, apparently not above the capacity of a literary artificer of the lowest kind. "By the means of catalogues only can it be known what has been written on

* Bibliography has recently received much honour, and many valuable accessions, from the zeal and liberality of Earl Spenser, Mr Heber, and Mr Bindley; and the insatiable love of literature, critical acumen, and indefatigable researches of Mr Nichols, Sir Samuel Egerton Brydges, Mr Dibdin, Mr Beloe, and Mr Park.

every part of learning; and the hazard avoided of encountering difficulties which have already been cleared, discussing questions which have already been decided, and digging in mines of literature which former ages have exhausted *."

The rank which he is entitled to hold as a *commentator*, among the editors of *Shakespeare*, has been considered in another place †. No modern poet has afforded more employment to critics and commentators than *Shakespeare*. As he wrote while the manners, no less than the language of his countrymen, were very different from what they are at present, and as he is reported to have been very careless about the fate of his performances after they were given to the public, he has become, in many instances, obscure, and almost unintelligible. Hence several learned and discerning editors have rendered essential service to the literature of their country, by explaining his obsolete phrases,

* *Account of the Harleian Library.*

† See page 305.

by freeing his text from spurious passages, and by elucidating his frequent allusions to obscure or antiquated customs. Labours of this sort are the more valuable, as *Shakespeare* is justly accounted the great poet of human nature. Even to moralists and philosophers, his display and illustration of passions and manners may afford not only amusement but instruction *. In the hands of Rowe, Pope, Theobald, Hanmer, and Warburton, the predecessors of Johnson, in this sort of labour, he assumed the complete dignity of a classic, and came forth with an accumulation of emendatory criticism, and philological illustration. But the merit must be attributed to Johnson, of having first adopted the plan of illustrating *Shakespeare* by the study of the writers of his own time, on which Steevens, Malone, Capel, Reed, and Douce,

* Professor Richardson's "Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters," &c. 8vo, 6th edit. p. 430; the production of an elegant and philosophical critic, who has very happily employed the light which this astonishing genius affords us, in illustrating some curious and interesting views of human nature.

have established their fame. Returning to the consideration of his labours, in this department, we may remark, that though he failed in carrying into effect his own admirable plan, through indolence rather than inability, the excellencies of his commentary, arising from other sources, amply atone for its defects. The annotations, with a few exceptions, exhibit astonishing proofs of sagacity in emendatory criticism, and a wide display of erudition, in explaining temporary allusions, and elucidating apparent obscurities. Under the perpetual necessity of correcting the wild, unfounded conjectures of Warburton, he never fails to treat him with respect as well as justice. His character, of lineaments resembling his own, fervid, active, searching, and grasping, is finely drawn. The general observations at the end of each play are drawn up with great elegance and precision. The *Preface* is an effort of genius, eloquence, critical perspicacity, and erudition, which almost sets the commentator on a level with the author. The panegyric on his unri-

valled perfections exhibits a blaze of excellence, that surpasses, in splendour of imagery, and sublimity of expression, every thing of the kind in our language. "The sand heaped by one flood is scattered by another, but the rock always continues in its place. The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabrics of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of *Shakespeare.*" While the peculiar excellencies of the incomparable "poet of Nature," his faithful display of character, and the felicity of his invention, are delineated with equal powers of discrimination and eloquence, the principal faults of "the great father of the English drama," his violations of historical truth, his deviations from dramatic regularity, his interchanges of serious and ludicrous incidents, his low conceits, and the frequent recurrence of scenes that suspend actions of importance, are laid open with even-handed justice, and commented upon with unsparing severity.

As a *novelist,* the amazing powers of his imagination, and his unbounded knowledge

of life and manners, may be plainly traced in the domestic story of *Misella*, and the Greenland story of *Anningait and Ajut*, in the *Rambler**; the *Story of Misargyrus*, in the *Adventurer* †; *The Fountains*, a *Fairy Tale*, in Miss Williams's "Miscellanies;" and the *Oriental Tales* in the *Rambler* ‡, and *Idler* §; in which he has not only supported, to the utmost, the sublimity of the eastern manner of expression, but even greatly excelled the oriental writers, in the fertility of his invention, and the justness and strength of his sentiments. His capital work, in this species of fiction, is *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia.*

* Nos. 170, 171, and 186, 187.

† Nos. 34, 41, 53.

‡ The *Apologue of Hamet and Raschid*, No. 38.; the *Story of Obidah and the Hermit*, No. 65.; the *History of Almamoulin the son of Nouradin*, No. 120.; the *Story of Abouzaid the son of Morad*, No. 190; and the *History of the ten days of Seged Emperor of Ethiopia*, Nos. 204, and 205.

§ The *Story of Gelaleddin of Bassora*, No. 75.; the *Story of Ortugrul of Basra*, No. 99.; and *Omar's Plan of Life*, No. 101.

None of his writings has been so extensively diffused over Europe. Such a reception demonstrates great beauties in the work; and there is no doubt that great beauties do exist there. The language enchants us with harmony; the arguments are acute and ingenious; the reflections novel, yet just. It astonishes with the sublimity of its sentiments, and at the fertility of its illustrations, and delights with the abundance and propriety of its imagery. The fund of deep and original thinking which it contains is such, that almost every sentence of it may furnish a subject of long meditation. The description of the *Happy Valley*, glowing in the freshness of beauty, and rich in the luxuriance of fancy, surpasses every oriental imitation *. The *Reflections on Human Life*, the *History of the Man of Learning*, the *Dissertation on Poetry*, and the *Character of a Wise and Happy Man*, possess the attractions of wisdom and eloquence. The discussions on the *Efficacy of Pilgrimage*, on the

* The "Hall of Eblis," in that sublime eastern tale, "Caliph Vathek," may bear a comparison with the *Palace* of the *Happy Valley*.

State of Departed Souls, on the *Probability of the Re-appearance of the Dead*, and on the *Danger of Insanity*, are interesting, as the vehicles of his peculiar opinions. The *History of the Mad Astronomer*, who imagines that, for five years, he possessed the regulation of the weather, is affecting, as it proceeds from one who lived in fear of the same dreadful visitation. "Of the uncertainties of our present state, the most dreadful and alarming is, the uncertain continuance of reason." But the *History of Rasselas*, excellent as it is, is not without its faults. It is barren of interesting incidents, and destitute of originality or distinction of characters. There is little difference in the manner of thinking and reasoning of the philosopher and the female, of the prince and the waiting-woman. *Nekayah* and *Imlac*, *Rasselas* and *Pekuah*, are all equally argumentative, abstracted, eloquent, and obstinate. Of that dark catalogue of calamities which are described as incident to the several situations of life which he contemplates, some are not the necessary consequence of the si-

tuation, but of the temper; and others are not those which are most generally or severely felt there. He represents all the passages through our existence, as equally impeded by dangers, which no prudence can prevent, and by sorrows which no philosophy can palliate, and no fortitude can sustain. *Rasselas*, on leaving the *Happy Valley* in search of public employment and general amusement, finds uniform disgust and disappointment; and *Nekayah* in her visits to the habitations of private comfort and domestic intercourse, meets only with suspicion, misery, and repentance. The moral that he seeks to inculcate, that there is no such thing as happiness, is ungrateful to the human heart, and inconsistent with the gratification of our most laudable affections and propensities. If he could succeed in establishing it, it would cripple every incitement to virtue, and paralyse every stimulus to action: it would leave man contented to be drifted down the stream of life, without an object or an end; to lose attainable excellence for the want of exertion, and

sink under surmountable difficulties, without a struggle. Though there may not be permanent happiness in the gratification of our wishes, there is much in our expectations that they will be gratified. Hope is the sweet and innocent solace of our frail nature. It is the staff of the unhappy; and, however feeble its support, it is unkind to wrest it from our hands. The benevolence of his intentions is indubitable; but in the gloom which his melancholy imagination raised around him, he saw darkly, and has pourtrayed humanity in livid colours. To peruse this moral tale with advantage, it is necessary for inexperienced youth, of ardent enterprize and refined sensibility, to guard against the discouraging experience of *Rasselas*, and to keep steadily in view the design of the venerable moralist, by representing the vanity of all earthly pursuits, to elevate our contemplations above this sublunary scene, and to fix our affections on a higher state of existence.

As a *journalist of travels*, his pretensions to excellence are founded on the relation of his

Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland, which, for the elegance and animation of the narrative, lively and picturesque description of local scenery, and depth and solidity of observation, is very justly esteemed a masterpiece of that delightful and instructive species of writing. We find what we expect, a man of strong sense, of an active and liberal curiosity, and of an independent spirit, traversing a country, in some degree foreign to him, reasoning with freedom on every occurrence; occasionally sketching the bold features of the scenery with the pencil of a master, and, divested of national partiality, philosophising on the genius, learning, manners, customs, and institutions of the inhabitants. By studying at home, he had obtained the ability of travelling into remote regions with intelligence and improvement; and the modes of life and appearances of Nature which his journey gave him an opportunity of seeing, afforded ample scope for speculation on the progress of civilization, and the display of a comparative sketch of national manners, in the various

stages of society. The antiquities and natural productions of the Highlands, which had employed the researches of Martin * and Pennant †, were not the objects of his investigation. He was neither an antiquary nor a naturalist. He went to the Hebrides to survey men and manners, and the face of the country; and his account of the Highlanders, their customs, their superstitions, their language, and their literature, is extremely accurate, judicious, and instructive ‡. National prejudice, suspecting the English traveller of undue partiality, loudly censured his representation of the want of trees on the east coast of Scotland, which is undeniable; and violently expressed a dissent from his decision on the authenticity of the poems of Ossian, in which there is now a general acquiescence on both sides of the Tweed. Among the popular superstitions, he

* Description of the Western Islands, 8vo, 1703.

† Tour in Scotland, &c. 4to, 1772—4.

‡ See the laudatory testimonies of Lord Hailes, Mr Dempster, Mr Tytler, &c. Boswell's Journal, &c. p. 422—6.

particularly investigated the evidence of the mysterious faculty ascribed to the Highlanders, of seeing spectres, or visions, which represent an event actually passing at a distance, or likely to happen at a future day; from a strong desire to authenticate the manifestation of a supernatural agency. The enquiry did not "advance his curiosity to conviction;" and he "came away at last only *willing* to believe." The touches of his pencil, in delineating the sublime features of the mountain-scenery, are rendered attractive, by superadding the more vivid hues of fancy to the colours of nature. "The hills exhibit very little variety, being almost wholly covered with dark heath. What is not heath is nakedness, a little diversified by now and then a stream rushing down the steep. An eye accustomed to flowery pastures and waving harvests, is astonished and repelled by this wide extent of sterility. The appearance is that of matter incapable of form, or usefulness, dismissed by Nature from her care, and disinherited of her favours; left in its original elemental state, or quickened on-

ly with one sullen power of useless vegetation. Regions, mountainous and wild, thinly inhabited and little cultivated, make a great part of the earth; and he that has never seen them must live unacquainted with much of the face of nature, and with one of the great scenes of human existence." Among the eloquent passages which dwell on the memory, the reflection that introduces the account of *Icolmkill*, "once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge, and the blessings of religion," is remarkable for its piety, pathos, and sublimity. "To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible, if it were endeavoured; and would be foolish, if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses, whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me, and from my friends, be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us, indifferent and unmoved, over any ground which has been

dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. That man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of *Marathon*, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of *Iona*."

As a *political writer*, his productions are more distinguished by subtlety of disquisition, poignancy of sarcasm, and dignity and energy of style, than by truth, equity, or candour. He makes much more use of his rhetoric than his logic, and often gives his reader high-sounding declamation instead of fair argument. In perusing his representations of those who differed from him in opinion, we are sometimes inclined to assent to a proposition of his own, that "there is no credit due to a rhetorician's account either of good or evil." Many positions are advanced in nervous language, and highly-polished periods, which are inconsistent with the principles of the British Constitution, and repugnant to the rights of the American colonies. He over-heated his mind by party-attachment, and adopted many arbitrary sentiments, which no felicity of lan-

guage can excuse; and directed many illiberal invectives against his opponents, for which no exuberance of wit can atone. Hostile alike to aristocratic associations and popular remonstrances, he substitutes ridicule in the place of truth, and violates, by rancour and abuse, the reciprocal civilities of literary warfare. These observations apply to his *Political Tracts*, written in support of Government; with the exception of his pamphlet *on the Transactions respecting Falkland's Islands*; which, though controvertible in a political view, contains a dissuasive from offensive war, that combines, with irresistible force, the utmost energies of reason and eloquence. It must always be regretted that so eminent a Christian moralist, and an undoubted friend to the common rights of mankind, should have manifested so strong a propensity to defend arbitrary principles of government. But, on this subject, the strength of his language was not more manifest than the weakness of his arguments. In apology for him, it will be admitted, that he was a high-flown Tory

from principle; and that, though the efforts of his pen were sometimes directed by men in power, most of what he wrote was strictly conformable to his real sentiments.

As an *epistolary writer*, his compositions are to be estimated by his own discriminating idea of the appropriate attributes of "the epistolic style." "Some, when they write to their friends, are all affection; some are wise and sententious; some strain their powers for effects of gravity; some write news; and some write secrets; but to make a letter without affection, without wisdom, without gravity, without news, and without secrets, is doubtless the great epistolic style. There is a pleasure in corresponding with a friend, where doubt and mistrust have no place, and *every thing is said as it is thought.* These are the letters by which souls are united, and by which minds, naturally in unison, move each other as they are moved themselves." Such are the characteristics of his *Letters to Mrs Thrale.* Some are grave, some gloomy, some pathetic, some sententious, and others are

lively, literary, domestic, and descriptive. They are valuable, as they fully delineate, without intending it, the picture of the man. We see him in health and in sickness, in solitude and in society, at home and abroad, and in all the petty business of life. From himself, and in his own words, we are enabled to collect the truest and best information. Whether grave or gay, he writes always in his own forcible style, but fashioned, on topics of a familiar kind, to gracefulness and ease. His words are sometimes too pompous, and his sentences too elaborate for familiar letters; but his skill in telling "every thing that one friend loves to know of another," is very advantageously displayed, and entitles him to rank with the best epistolary writers of our nation. Everywhere, we find the strongest demonstrations of his piety, his kind affections, and the goodness of his heart. His letters to *Mrs Thrale*, on the death of her mother, and on the loss of her only son, are at once moral and pathetic. His solicitude for Mr Thrale during a long illness, and his

feelings at his death, do honour to the memory of the dead, and to the gratitude and sensibility of the survivor. "I am afraid of thinking what I have lost; I never had such a friend before." To *Mrs Thrale* he says, "to see and hear you, is always to hear wit and see virtue." He seems at times to think her regard for him is abated: "shall we never again exchange our thoughts by the fire-side?" His letters to *Miss Boothby*, in her last illness, which closed a continued correspondence, express the most tender regard, and the most heartfelt anxiety. "I love and honour you, and am unwilling to lose you. I beg of you to endeavour to live. I am in great trouble. If you can write three words to me, be pleased to do it. I am afraid to say much, and cannot say nothing when my dearest is in danger. The all-merciful God have mercy on you." It is comfortable to hear him say, almost at the close of life, "Attention and respect give pleasure, however late, and however useless; but they are not useless even when they are late: it is reasonable to rejoice as the

day declines, to find that it has been spent with the approbation of mankind." Sentiments such as these, diffused among the more trifling topics of his epistolary correspondence, must always be interesting to the world at large, and will be cherished with affection and regard by mankind in all times and circumstances.

As a *theologian*, his principles and practical opinions preserved in his *Prayers and Meditations*, and his *Sermons*, represent him as a humble disciple of that Redeemer whose faith he professed, sincerely pious, and scrupulously regular in the performance of his religious duties. His *Prayers*, composed for private devotion, adapted to the infirmities of a frail mortal, approaching the throne of the Almighty, are remarkable for their simplicity, energy, and conciseness. They bear some resemblance to the collects in the "Common Prayer-Book," without that dignity which is derived to the latter from the venerable antiquity of the style and expression. They have no particular method, no display of genius, no pretensions to wisdom, no ambitious

ornament, no affectation in the style, and no words of unusual occurrence. They have no beauties that should characterize the man of stupendous abilities and great learning, under whose name they appear. They have nothing that might not have been produced by any man of plain common sense, and upright intention, warmed with a devotion, at once rational and sincere. We see a great and good man in a state of humility and self-abasement, feeling and acknowledging the common wants and infirmities of all human creatures. His self-abasement was strictly ingenuous; but his expressions, when compared with the tenor of his conduct, seem too disparaging. Christianity does not require us to deny any one quality we possess, or to represent ourselves, in defiance of truth, as one mass of deformity and guilt. The instruction of St Paul, enforced by the most sacred example, is singly this, that we "think not of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but that we think soberly." We owe to the excellencies of the Supreme Being, every

possible degree of veneration and honour; but that virtue should tremble in the presence of Infinite Goodness, is not less contrary to reason than it is contrary to heroism. In the presence of Infinite Goodness it feels a congeniality, and assumes a confidence, that leaps, as it were, the gulph between, and dares to aspire to sentiments of attachment, fidelity, and love. But it would be unfair to conclude from this circumstance, that the piety and humility of Johnson were of no value; and the sincerity of his repentance, the stedfastness of his faith, and the fervour of his charity, of no use. There is something so great and awful in the idea of the Almighty, and something so fascinating in the effusions of gratitude, that there are numbers of men, intrepid and heroical in every other regard, that cannot boast of all the serenity and assurance in the business of religion that are so earnestly to be desired; and yet the piety of these men is precious and availing. The fate of "the unprofitable servant" may, indeed, justly beget apprehensions in the stoutest mind.

His *Meditations*, as they are improperly called, are not to be considered in the same favourable light, as a manual of devotion, for the practice and improvement of Christian piety. They are merely minutes, at one time of resolutions for his future conduct, and at another, of private occurrences, in the style of a diary or journal. They deserve attention, as memorials of the tenderness of his conscience, and the constitutional feebleness of his nature; full of frivolous minutenesses and punctilious weaknesses, beyond any thing of which an abstract description can suggest the idea. They tell us, that, in spite of all the contemptuous ridicule with which he has treated that delicate frame, which depends for its composure on the clouds and the winds, he was not himself exempt from languor, sluggishness, and procrastination; that he was not free from the most pitiable religious credulity, and superstitious timidity; and that his attention was often engrossed by things in the last degree frivolous, futile, and unimportant. These representations are

certainly disadvantageous to him; but they give no real occasion either for censure or derision. When we follow him through all his weaknesses, his religious horrors, and sacred punctilios, we lament that the frailties of human nature inevitably preclude the attainment of Christian perfection. At the same time, we admire the perseverance and fervour of his devotion, and the tender sensibility and humane benevolence of his heart, that have rarely been equalled by the least faulty professors of Christianity, To express uneasiness because, through mistake, he drank a spoonful of milk in a cup of tea, on a fast day, shews his attention to the minutest circumstance that appeared likely to render his humiliation the means of securing the divine favour. The praying for his deceased wife has occasioned disquietude and offence among the strict and severe in doctrinal religion, as it countenances an inclination to the doctrine of purgatory; but his prayers, with the limitations there expressed, though they deviate from strict Protestantism, are so far from

weakening his admirable arguments in favour of religion, that they add force to his pious reasonings, from the proof they afford that he believed in the religion he inculcated. The struggle in a breast, constituted as his was, between the severe principles of Protestantism and the genuine undisciplinable feelings of the heart, illustrates the kindness of his nature more than it could be illustrated by any other circumstance. The *Sermons*, published under the name of Dr Taylor, possess the peculiarities of his style, sentiment, and composition, in a recognizable degree. Some of them are in his best manner; and all of them inculcate, without enthusiasm or dogmatism, the purest precepts and doctrines of religion and morality. The discourse on the death of his wife, which Dr Taylor declined to deliver, is remarkable, as a solemn and pathetic moral lesson, written with a warmth of feeling and fervour of devotion suitable to the occasion, and nowhere overcharged with unqualified praise or ambitious ornament. The rest of the discourses were

the fund which Dr Taylor, from time to time, carried with him to the pulpit *.

The *style* which he introduced into English composition, has been too often criticised, by friends and enemies, to need being considered here. It has been censured, applauded, and imitated, to extremes equally dangerous to the purity of the English tongue. That he has innovated upon our language by the adoption of Latin derivatives, and a preference of abstract to concrete terms, cannot be denied. But the danger from his innovation would be trifling, if those alone would copy him who can think with equal precision; for few passages can be pointed out from his works in which his meaning could be as accurately expressed by words

* He owned to Mr Boswell, that he had written about *forty sermons;* but as he had given or sold them to different persons who were to preach them, he did not think himself at liberty to acknowledge them. The value of the *twenty-five* discourses that we possess, inclines us to wish that the remainder, if still existing in manuscript, were given to the world.

in more familiar use. His comprehension of mind was the mould for his language. Had his comprehension been narrower, his expression would have been easier. His sentences have a dignified march, suitable to the elevation of his sentiments, the measure of his pauses, and the pomp of his sonorous phraseology. And it is to be remembered, that while he has added dignity and harmony to our language, he has neither vitiated it by the insertion of foreign idioms, nor the affectation of anomaly in the construction of his sentences. While the flowers of poetic imagination luxuriantly adorn his style, it is never enfeebled by their plenitude. It is close without obscurity, perspicuous without languor, and strong without impetuosity. No periods are so harmonious, none so nervous. Parallelisms, pointed phrases, verbal recurrences, measured pauses, triads, antitheses, alliteration, and metaphor, are constantly employed for the purposes of dignity, strength, and harmony. He has laboured his style with the greatest attention. Its elaborateness, is per-

haps, too apparent. It has, perhaps, too unwieldy, and too uniform a dignity. It has much of the harmony, and sometimes, perhaps, somewhat of the monotony of verse. Among the deviations from customary construction, may be reckoned the substitution of substantives for the other parts of speech, of the imperfect tense for the perfect participle, of the indicative for the subjunctive mood, the use of the plural verb with the disjunctive conjunction, and the omission of the ellipses of the pronoun. He seems to have been particularly studious of the glitter of an antithesis between the epithet and the substantive. This strikes while it is new; but to the more experienced reader, though it may seem sometimes forcible, yet it will often prove tiresome. It is remarkable, that his early performances bear few marks of the style which he adopted in the *Rambler*. In the *Life of Savage*, the style is elegant, but not ostentatious. His sentences are naturally arranged, and musical without artifice. He affects not the measuring of clauses and the

balancing of periods; he aims not at splendid, glowing diction; he seeks not pointed phrases and elaborate contrasts. It is also worthy of remark, that he has altered, and perhaps improved his style, long after his reputation had been established, and the *Rambler* had appeared. The composition of this work differs, in some degree, from that of *Rasselas*, the *Journey to the Western Islands*, and the *Lives of the Poets*. The native vigour and peculiarity of feature are preserved; but they are polished to greater elegance, and taught to wear the appearance of a happier ease. In the *Rambler* his periods are longer, and his meaning more condensed; he is more fond of abstract terms, and ambitious of sesquipedalian words. But this work was written while he was occupied in collecting authorities for the *English Dictionary*; at a time when Browne and Hooker, Bacon and Hakewill, Raleigh and Knolles, were continually before him; men whom it was difficult to read, and remain free from the temptation to imitate. In his latter productions, particularly the

Lives of the Poets, his sentences are shorter, their construction more simple, and the use of Latin derivatives less frequent. He has made his style, in a greater degree, elegant without constraint, dignified without ambitious ornament, strong without rigidity, and harmonious without elaboration. By a strict attention to verbal precision, the sedulous rejection of expletives and irregular combinations, and the melodious collocation of the sentences, he has refined our language to grammatical purity, and formed a style of English prose, perfectly original, and more correct, dignified, and harmonious, than that of any of the English writers, from Addison and Bolingbroke to Melmoth and Hume. At the same time, it must be confessed, that, except on topics of elevation and sublimity, the loss of the colloquial ease, sweetness, and simplicity which distinguish the writings of Addison, is scarcely compensated by the solidity of condensed conceptions, the harmony of artificial arrangement, and the pomp of sonorous phraseology. As Homer gave a peculiar lan-

guage to his gods, to express their divine conceptions, let us allow to Johnson, and to men like him, a style such as he has used; for we have as yet found none more rich, accurate, and majestic. It is certain that his example has given a general elevation and correctness to English composition; for scarcely any thing is written now that is not expressed with more precision and propriety than was usual before he appeared to lead the national taste. This circumstance is well described by Mr Courtenay, in the discriminative catalogue of his immediate disciples.

> "By Nature's gifts ordain'd mankind to rule,
> He, like a Titian, formed his brilliant school,
> And taught congenial spirits to excel,
> While from his lips impressive wisdom fell."

Among the "congenial spirits" who formed "the school of Johnson," he commemorates the respectable names of Goldsmith, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr Burney, Mr Malone, Mr Steevens, Dr Hawkesworth, Sir William

Jones, and Mr Boswell; and concludes the tribute to his scholars, with a panegyric on the revolution produced by his example in English composition.

"Nor was his energy confin'd alone
To friends around his philosophic throne;
Its influence wide improved our letter'd isle,
And lucid vigour marked the general style.
As Nile's proud waves, swoln from their oozy bed,
First o'er the neighbouring meads majestic spread,
Till, gathering force, they more and more expand,
And with new virtue fertilize the land *."

Among the imitators of his style, whether intentionally, or by the imperceptible effect of its strength and animation, may be reckoned a great proportion of the most distinguished literary characters of the present reign. The writings of Dr Robertson, Dr Blair, Mr Burke, Mr Gibbon, Dr Leland, Dr Ferguson, Dr Paley, Dr Beattie, Dr Stuart, Dr Knox, Dr Parr, Dr Thomson, Dr Gillies, Dr Drake, Professor Richardson, Mrs Barbauld, Professor Stewart, Sir James Mackintosh, Mr

* Poetical Review, &c.

Mackenzie, Miss Edgeworth, and Mr Roscoe, shew that they have caught, in a greater or less degree, the vigour, precision, and dignity, as well as the splendour, expansion, and harmony, which characterize the style of Johnson. Aspiring genius, aiming at composition in history, criticism, and philosophy, in each succeeding generation, will adopt his rich and nervous style with advantage, as it harmonizes most happily with topics of weight, splendour, and dignity. But let men of moderate conceptions beware of ill-judged imitations, Their attempt to copy his language is Salmoneus thundering at Elis, or a mortal wielding the spear of Achilles. It is to raise a melancholy contrast between the slimness of the thought, and the capacity of the expression; to cover the head of a pigmy with the casque of a giant *.

* The "Criticism on Gray's Elegy" is exempted from the censure of the professed imitations of the form rather than the spirit of his style, as it has not only the peculiarities of his phraseology, but the prominent features of his style of criticism. Dr Burrowes's essay on his style in the "Transactions of the Irish Academy," vol. i. furnishes an example of it.

As a *poet*, his merit, though considerable, yet falls far short of that which he has displayed in those departments of literature in which we have surveyed him. As far as strength of expression, fertility of invention, and abundance of imagery, constitute poetry, he is much more a poet in his prose works than in his metrical compositions. Passion, to the merit of which he was blind and uncharitable, is so much the soul and essence of poetry, that without it rhyme and metre are vain. There may be smoothness, syllabic arrangment, and good sense in a metrical composition; but there can be no true poetry without imagery, warm expression, and an enthusiasm which intoxicates the reader, lifts him above the ground, and makes him forget that he is mortal. Ratiocination prevailed in Johnson much more than sensibility. He has no daring sublimities nor gentle graces. He never glows with the enthusiasm of inspiration, nor kindles a sympathetic emotion in the bosom of his reader. He makes no excursions "beyond the visible diurnal sphere," nor "es-

says knowledge denied to ears of flesh and blood." He never strays beyond the walks of mere modern life, back to the regions of Gothic fancy, the dominions of pure poetry. He constantly addresses himself to the understanding. His poems are the plain and sensible effusions of a mind never hurried beyond itself, to which the use of rhyme adds no beauty, and from which the use of prose would detract no force. His versification is correct, splendid, and harmonious, but his pauses are not sufficiently varied to secure him from the imputation of monotony. He seems never at a loss for rhyme, or destitute of a proper expression. The purity and energy of the diction, and the weight and compression of the sentiment, appear admirably adapted to didactic, ethic, and satiric poetry, for which his powers were equally, and perhaps alone qualified. These observations do not detract from his merit, as the professed disciple of Pope, rather than of Milton. Judging of his *Irene*, the *Imitations of Juvenal*, the *Prologue on the opening of Drury-lane*

Theatre, and the stanzas *on the death of Mr Robert Levett*, by his own poetical standard, we may claim for him a distinguished place in the school of the great "poet of reason," and "the prince of rhyme."

The tragedy of *Irene* may be considered as the greatest effort of his genius. The substance of the story is shortly this: In 1453, *Mahomet the Great*, first emperor of the Turks, laid siege to Constantinople; and having reduced the place, became enamoured of a fair Greek, whose name was *Irene*. The sultan invited her to embrace the law of Mahomet, and to grace his throne. Enraged at this intended marriage, the janizaries formed a conspiracy to dethrone the emperor. To avert the impending danger, *Mahomet*, in a full assembly of the grandees, "catching with one hand," as Knolles expresses it, "the fair Greek by the hair of her head, and drawing his faulchion with the other, he, at one blow, struck off her head, to the great terror of them all; and having so done, said unto them, "Now, by this,

judge whether your emperor is able to bridle his affections or not." The story is simple, and it remained for Johnson to amplify it with proper episodes, and give it complication and variety. But he has altered the character and catastrophe, which he found in the historian, so as to diminish the dramatic effect. Many faults may be found with the conduct of the fable. The principal one is, that the plot is double, and has the most striking faults of such a fable; for it divides the spectator's attention and regard between characters whose interests are opposite, and whose happiness or misery is made to depend upon the same events. We cannot hope the escape of *Demetrius* and *Aspasia*, without dreading the condemnation of *Irene*; and our wishes as to each, operating in contradiction, must diminish our concern for both. The catastrophe, which is made to depend upon the fate of *Irene*, is meanly worked up. It is brought about too suddenly, without a due connection with preparatory incidents, and at the very moment when we have not lei-

sure to contemplate it, and are alone interested for the escape of *Demetrius* and *Aspasia.* We neither anticipate it with sufficient perspicuity, nor consider it with solemnity, so as to be affected upon its occurrence, with genuine dramatic grief or terror. The characters of the piece have nothing discriminative. They are not representations of different tempers, passions, and minds, but of different degrees of virtue and vice. They are so naked of peculiarity, that we cannot know why the same incidents should operate differently upon any one of them, so as to impel them to a different action, or produce an emotion even varying in strength from what it would have done in any other. They possess too much of a balanced importance in the conduct of the drama, so that the mind knows not how to make its election of a principal character, or to fix its attention upon any personage to whose felicity it may attach its wishes, and upon whose fate it may suspend its sympathy. From the name of the tragedy, we must suppose that Johnson considered *Irene* as the

heroine; yet the reader feels more concern, even for the stoic virtue and cool fondness of *Aspasia*. The former is too much of a mixed character; neither her goodness, nor her weakness, nor her depravity, is predominant. She has not sufficient virtue to awaken our sympathy for the sufferings of innocence, nor sufficient vice to arouse our terror at the punishment of guilt. The speeches are oftener the recollections of past feelings, than the ebullitions of immediate passions, started by the passing actions of the scene. Little is made present to the spectator's mind, and of that little, nothing has life. There is not a single situation to excite curiosity, and raise a conflict of passions. His critique upon the tragic poets, at the commencement of the eighteenth century, is, perhaps, in no instance, more true than it is of himself.

"From bard to bard the frigid caution crept,
And *declamation* roar'd whilst *passion* slept;
Yet still did virtue deign the stage to tread,
Philosophy remain'd though *Nature* fled."

When every deduction is made which criticism requires, *Irene* retains the characteristical qualities of a legitimate dramatic composition. The unities are strictly observed; the diction is nervous, rich, and elegant; the sentiments are striking, moral, and practical; the poetical imagery is chaste and pure, and the versification is vigorous, accurately polished, and regularly musical. It would be difficult to select a passage in dramatic poetry more nobly conceived or finely expressed than the reply of *Demetrius* to the complaint of his friend, that no prodigy from Heaven had foretold the calamities of Greece.

"A thousand horrid prodigies foretold it;
A feeble government, eluded laws,
A factious populace, luxurious nobles,
And all the maladies of sinking states.
When public villany, too strong for justice,
Shews his bold front, the harbinger of ruin,
Can brave *Leontius* call for any wonders,
Which cheats interpret, and which fools regard?
When some neglected fabric nods beneath
The weight of years, and totters to the tempest,
Must Heaven dispatch the messengers of light,
Or wake the dead to warn us of its fall?"

Irene may be added to some other plays in our language, which have lost their place in the theatre, but continue to please in the closet. As it is the drama of our great English moralist, replete with the most solid and manly observations on human life, and rich in nervous and emphatic language, it would be desirable to see it revived.

The *Imitations of Juvenal* are, perhaps, the noblest imitations to be found in any language. They are not so close as Pope's imitations of Horace, but they are infinitely more spirited and energetic. In Pope, the peculiar images of Roman life are adapted, with singular address, to our own times; in Johnson, the similitude is only in general passages, suitable to every age in which refinement has degenerated into depravity. His *London* breathes the true vehement and contemptuous indignation of the original satire. It is more popular in its subject, and more pointed and forcible in its composition than his *Vanity of Human Wishes.* It blazes forth with original fire, in the liveliness of its correspondent allu-

sions, the energy of its expressions, and the frequency of its apostrophes. The *Vanity of Human Wishes* is more grave, moral, sententious, and stately. In his *London*, he often takes nothing more than the subject from the Roman poet, proves or illustrates it according to the originality of his own conceptions, or the warmth of his own fancy; and sometimes he deserts him altogether, and that not only where the modesty of an English ear, and the inapplicability of the original to modern customs require it, but in places where the topics and the moral use are as applicable to London as they are to ancient Rome. The *Vanity of Human Wishes* follows the original more closely, but still with many omissions. The subject is taken from the second "Alcibiades" of Plato, and has an intermixture of the sentiments of Socrates, concerning the object of prayers offered up to the Deity. The general proposition is, that good and evil are so little understood by mankind, that their wishes, when granted, are always destructive. This is exemplified in a variety of

instances, such as riches, state-preferment, eloquence, military glory, long life, and beauty. For the characters which Juvenal has chosen to illustrate his doctrine, Johnson has substituted others from modern history; for Sejanus he gives *Wolsey, Buckingham, Strafford, Clarendon,* and *Oxford;* for Demosthenes and Cicero, *Lydiat, Galileo,* and *Laud;* for Xerxes and Hannibal, the *Elector of Bavaria* and *Charles XII;* for Nestor and Crœsus, *Marlborough* and *Swift;* and for Lucretia and Virginia, *Vane* * and *Sedley* †. The "full-blown dignity" of the haughty cardinal, and his humble "end," are contrasted with the utmost felicity and force. The sorrows of the "scholar's life" are represented with

* The name has been applied to *Lady Vane,* whose "Memoirs" are inserted in "Peregrine Pickle," and to another person, perhaps more correctly. See Life of Smollett, prefixed to his Miscellaneous Works, 4th edit. p. 33.

† This example is ill-chosen, for it is well known that *Catharine Sedley,* Countess of Dorchester, mistress to James II. was not handsome. The name of *Shore* would have been a more suitable example.

such preciseness of detail, that he could not read the melancholy paragraph without tears*. The weak "foundation of the warrior's pride" is strikingly exemplified in the fate of "Swedish Charles:"

"His fall was destin'd to a barren strand,
A petty fortress, and a dubious hand;
He left the name, at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral or adorn a tale."

The "protracted woes" of "protracted life," are pathetically enumerated, and the dark catalogue is closed with examples of the deplorable privation of reason, among the consequences of longevity.

"In life's last scene, what prodigies surprize!
Fears of the brave, and follies of the wise:
From *Marlborough's* eyes the streams of dotage flow,
And *Swift* expires a driv'ller, and a shew."

Owing to the dearth of modern examples, he has fewer characters than the Roman satirist; but in the aptness of the allusions, and the happiness of the parallels, he has succeeded

* Mrs Piozzi's Anecdotes, &c. p. 50.

wonderfully; and though we cannot say that he has surpassed his prototype, he has entered into a noble competition, and given to his imitation the air of an original. The christian had to struggle with the heathen poet, and has manifested a superiority, by the substitution of a purer and more sublime system of morality, sanctioned by the solemnity and pathos of the Christian code. He has preserved all the beauties of the original doctrine, but stripped it, with infinite art, from all appearance of epicurean infidelity, and filled it with precepts worthy of a philosopher, and wishes fitting for a Christian. The admirable conclusion of the satire is improved into an impressive lesson of piety and resignation.

"Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,
Obedient passions, and a will resign'd;
For love, which scarce collective man can fill;
For patience, sovereign o'er transmuted ill;
For faith, that, panting for a happier seat,
Counts death kind Nature's signal of retreat:

These goods for man the laws of heav'n ordain;
These goods he grants, who grants the power to gain:
With these celestial Wisdom calms the mind,
And makes the happiness she does not find."

The *Prologue for the opening of Drury-lane Theatre* is distinguished, among compositions of this class, as a masterly and comprehensive criticism on the several stages of the English drama, from Shakespeare to Garrick. In sense, invention, and poetic expression, it is superior to any prologue of Dryden, and rivals, in sublimity, enthusiasm, and appropriate description, Pope's prologue to the tragedy of "Cato," which stands at the head of this species of writing. It may be affirmed, without hazard of contradiction, that the genius of *Shakespeare* is delineated, at the commencement of these verses, with a sublimity of conception, and a felicity of expression, which challenge the whole compass of English poetry.

"Each change of many-colour'd life he drew,
Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new;
Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign,
And panting Time toil'd after him in vain."

The stanzas *on the death of Mr Robert Levett*, as they were the last, so they are the best of his short addresses to the moral muse. We find nothing more exquisitely moral, more genuinely sublime, more tenderly characteristic, and more universally interesting, in the whole range of ethic poetry. The simple, energetic tribute of affection, consecrated to the commemoration of modest worth and active benevolence, warm from the heart, is irresistibly pathetic; and the affecting representation of the miseries of suffering humanity, alleviated by the compassionate philanthropist, "of every friendless name the friend," cannot fail to be answered by corresponding emotions of tenderness in every bosom, and the effusion of sympathetic tears from every eye. The praise which he missed from the muse of Tragedy, is due, without limitation, to the solemn and sublime inspiration of the muse of Elegy.

In the mass of his miscellaneous poems, the merit of his other *Prologues* is too conspicuous to be overlooked. They are copies of his mind, clear and comprehensive, pointed

and energetic. In the *Prologue* spoken before the masque of "Comus," for the benefit of Milton's grand-daughter, the charitable propensities of his heart, and his favourable disposition towards our incomparable poet, are manifested beyond all suspicion of affectation.

> "At length our mighty bard's victorious lays
> Fill the loud voice of universal praise;
> And baffled spite, with hopeless anguish dumb,
> Yields to renown the centuries to come."

His *Odes* on the seasons, though professedly descriptive, belong to the lesser species of lyric composition, combining morality with gaiety, and vivacity with elegance. Those on *Autumn* and *Winter* are the best; though, with respect to description, the imagery in both is chiefly traditionary, and, in the latter, evidently a transcript from Horace. Among his lyric effusions, of which he seems to have been fond, we find many expressions exceedingly beautiful, as usual, moral, and unusually pathetic. They manifest, however, no

traces of enthusiasm. They are not, we perceive, the production of a warm fancy, impelled to give vent by poetry to its overflowing feelings. Those passions and objects which would inspire the genuine poetic mind with enthusiasm, pass by him unfelt and unnoticed. He is melancholy in *Spring*, and jocund in *Winter*; he lavishes no praises on the perfumed zephyrs, but moralizes on the vicissitudes of time, or commemorates the comforts of a cheering flaggon and a snug fire-side. His *Ode to Friendship* is of the same species of lyric composition, adapted to his powers, uniting, in just proportion, correctness and delicacy of sentiment, with beauty and elegance of expression. *Evening, an Ode*, and *The Winter's Walk*, addressed to *Stella*, a name celebrated in all his lyric compositions, are both distinguished by the same just mixture of sentiment and imagery, expressed in a strain of tender delicacy, which shews that he was neither ignorant of the feelings nor insensible to the joys of a lover. Of his address *To Lyce, an el-*

derly Lady, the idea, perhaps, is not original, but the images are happily selected and well expressed. The verses *To Lady Firebrace; Stella in mourning*; and *On her playing upon the Harpsichord in a room hung with flower-pieces of her own painting; To Miss Hickman, playing on the spinet; To a Lady on receiving from her a sprig of myrtle*, are occasional compositions, and of course derive their merit chiefly from local and temporary circumstances. The principal art in such compositions, is to make a trifling circumstance poetical or witty. In the verses *on the Sprig of Myrtle*, he has succeeded most happily. The *Epitaph on Claude Phillips*, the *Paraphrase on Proverbs*, and the verses *on the Death of Stephen Gray*, are nervous and elegant, and worthy the pen of Pope. Of the remaining pieces, some are parodies and burlesque verses, the suggestions of temporary incidents; and others are mere impromptus, which were never intended for the public eye. Many of them are sprightly and elegant, and may be read with plea-

sure; but they require no distinct enumeration or particular criticism *.

* Some of the smaller poems enumerated here have not been received into the last collected edition of his Works, 8vo, 1810. A very beautiful translation of an elegant and pathetic passage in the *Medea* of Euripides, v. 190. introduced to the world in a late volume of "Translations from the Greek Anthology," &c. 8vo. may now be added to the collection of his poems.

"The rites derived from ancient days
With thoughtless reverence we praise;
The rites that taught us to combine
The joys of music and of wine;
That bade the feast, the song, the bowl,
O'er-fill the saturated soul;
But ne'er the lute nor lyre applied
To sooth Despair or soften Pride,
Nor call'd them to the gloomy cells
Where Madness raves and Vengeance swells;
Where Hate sits musing to betray,
And Murder meditates his prey.
To dens of guilt and shades of care
Ye sons of melody repair;
Nor deign the festive hour to cloy
With superfluity of joy;
The board with varied plenty crown'd
May spare the luxury of sound."

The *Parody of a Translation* of the same exquisite passage, among his *Burlesque Verses*, may be compared with Dr Warton's admirable imitation of it, which defies ridicule.

Among the English poets who have cultivated Latin poetry, Johnson claims a place, in the first rank, next to Milton, Addison, and Gray. He was eminently skilled in the Latin tongue, and strongly attached to the cultivation of Latin poetry. The first fruits of his genius were compositions in Latin verse. His translation of *Messiah*, a college exercise, performed with great rapidity, received the praise of the university, and the approbation of Pope. Virgil was his model for language and versification. He has copied the varied pauses of his verse, the length of his periods, the peculiar grace of his expression, and his majestic dignity, with considerable success. The version is animated, intelligible, flowing, and faithful; at the same time, it certainly contains some unclassical and incorrect expressions, which are not to be examined with great severity of criticism *. His poem, *Know yourself*, in Virgilian verse, is the most elegant, energetic, and interest-

* It has been severely criticised by Dr Warton in his edition of Pope, vol. i. p. 105. 8vo, 1797.

ing of his Latin compositions * Of his lyric compositions, the *Odes, Inchkenneth; the Isle of Sky; To Mrs Thrale; To Dr Lawrence; In the Theatre*, are most valuable, uniting classical language, tender sentiment, and harmonious verse. His *Epitaphs* are distinguished by classical elegance and nervous simplicity. Those on *Goldsmith* † and *Thrale* seem the best. His *Epigrams* are, in general, neat and pointed. In the *Anthologia*, we admire sometimes a happy imitation, and sometimes regret inelegant expressions.

Of the originality of his *Latin poetry* much cannot be said; for all that the most successful writer can do, in a language that allows no new expressions and ideas, is to express the thoughts of the ancients in their language, merely to shew how well he is acquainted

* See page 490.

† When his literary friends remonstrated in a *Round Robin* against the commemoration of so eminent an English writer in the Latin language, he replied, *He would never consent to disgrace the walls of Westminster Abbey with an English inscription.* See Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iii. p. 84.

with their style and expression. "The delight which compositions of this kind afford," to use his own words in criticising the Latin poetry of Milton, "is rather by the exquisite imitation of the ancient writers, by the purity of the diction, and the harmony of the numbers, than by any power of invention, or vigour of sentiment."

From the review that has been ventured upon here of the various productions of Johnson, it may be fairly allowed, as he used to say of himself, that *he has written his share.* No English writer can be said to have contributed more copiously to the improvement of our language, and the enlargement of our national stock of biography, criticism, and moral instruction than Johnson. Looking forward, we may safely anticipate the lengthened duration of his writings, among the imperishable monuments of our national genius and learning. He may have irritated party, mortified pride, or awakened envy in his contemporaries by the severity of his chastisements, and the peculiarity of his opinions and manners, as well as by his

gigantic abilities; but his party prejudices, his peculiarities, and his infirmities in common life, will, after a while, be overlooked and forgotten, and posterity will admire the depth, force, dignity, moral purity, and originality of his writings, as long as the language of which he has made use shall remain intelligible, and Britons continue to be characterized by a love of elegance and sublimity, of correctness and solidity, of good sense and virtue.

It remains to produce a few testimonies concerning this extraordinary person, out of a great multitude, from which an estimate may be formed of his character, by comparison, and at one view.

Mr Boswell delineated the great features of his character, at frequent sittings, with a vivid, discriminating pencil. The drawing appears to be sufficiently accurate, the light and shade well distributed, and the colouring very little overcharged or heightened; though a favourable likeness was, perhaps, in some degree, intended, as far as might seem consistent with the truth of resemblance, and no farther.

"His figure was large and well formed, and his countenance of the cast of an ancient statue; yet his appearance was rendered strange, and somewhat uncouth, by convulsive cramps, by the scars of that distemper which it was once imagined the royal touch could cure, and by a slovenly mode of dress. He had the use only of one eye; yet, so much does mind govern, and even supply the deficiency of organs, that his visual perceptions, as far as they extended, were uncommonly quick and accurate. So morbid was his temperament, that he never knew the natural joy of a free and vigorous use of his limbs: when he walked it was like the struggling gait of one in fetters; when he rode, he had no command or direction of his horse, but was carried as if in a balloon. At different times he seemed a different man, in some respects; not, however, in any great or essential article, upon which he had fully employed his mind, and settled certain principles of duty, but only in his manners, and in displays of argument and fancy in his

talk. He was prone to superstition, but not to credulity. Though his imagination might incline him to a belief of the marvellous and the mysterious, his vigorous reason examined the evidence with jealousy. He was a sincere and zealous Christian, of high church of England and monarchical principles, which he would not tamely suffer to be questioned; and had, perhaps, at an early period, narrowed his mind somewhat too much, both as to religion and politics. His being impressed with the danger of extreme latitude in either, though he was of a very independent spirit, occasioned his appearing somewhat unfavourable to the prevalence of that noble freedom of sentiment which is the best possession of man. Nor can it be denied, that he had many prejudices; which, however, frequently suggested many of his pointed sayings, that rather show a playfulness of fancy than any settled malignity. He was steady and inflexible in maintaining the obligations of religion and morality, both from a regard for the order of society, and from a venera-

tion for the Great Source of all order; correct, nay, stern in his taste; hard to please, and easily offended; impetuous and irritable in his temper, but of a most humane and benevolent heart, which showed itself, not only in a most liberal charity, as far as his circumstances would allow, but in a thousand instances of active benevolence. He was afflicted with a bodily disease which made him restless and fretful, and with a constitutional melancholy, the clouds of which darkened the brightness of his fancy, and gave a gloomy cast to his whole course of thinking. We therefore ought not to wonder at his sallies of impatience and passion at any time, especially when provoked by obtrusive ignorance, or presuming petulance; and allowance must be made for his uttering hasty and satirical sallies, even against his best friends. And surely, when it is considered that, 'amidst sickness and sorrow,' he exerted his faculties in so many works for the benefit of mankind, and particularly that he achieved the great and admirable Dictionary of our language,

we must be astonished at his resolution. The solemn text of 'him to whom much is given much will be required,' seems to have been ever present to his mind in a rigorous sense, and to have made him dissatisfied with his labours and acts of goodness, however comparatively great; so that the unavoidable consciousness of his superiority was in that respect a cause of disquiet. He suffered so much from this, and from the gloom which perpetually haunted him, and made solitude frightful, that it may be said of him, 'If in this life only he had hope, he was of all men most miserable.' He loved praise when it was brought to him; but was too proud to seek for it. He was somewhat susceptible of flattery. As he was general and unconfined in his studies, he cannot be considered as master of any one particular science; but he had accumulated a vast and various collection of learning and knowledge, which was so arranged in his mind, as to be ever in readiness to be brought forth. But his superiority over other learned men consisted chiefly in what

may be called the art of thinking, the art of using his mind; a certain continual power of seizing the useful substance of all that he knew, and exhibiting it in a clear and forcible manner; so that knowledge which we often see to be no better than lumber in men of dull understanding, was in him true, evident, and actual wisdom. His moral precepts are practical; for they are drawn from an intimate acquaintance with human nature. His maxims carry conviction; for they are founded on the basis of common sense. His mind was so full of imagery, that he might have been perpetually a poet; yet it is remarkable, that however rich his prose is in that respect, the poetical pieces which he wrote were in general not so, but rather strong sentiment and acute observation, conveyed in good verse, particularly in heroic couplets. Though usually grave, and even awful in his deportment, he possessed uncommon and peculiar powers of wit and humour: he frequently indulged himself in colloquial pleasantry; and the heartiest merriment was

often enjoyed in his company; with this great advantage, that as it was entirely free from any poisonous tincture of vice or impiety, it was salutary to those who shared in it. He had accustomed himself to such accuracy in his common conversation, that he at all times delivered himself with a force, choice, and elegance of expression; the effect of which was aided by his having a loud voice, and a slow and deliberate utterance. In him were united a most logical head with a most fertile imagination, which gave him an extraordinary advantage in arguing; for he could reason close or wide, as he saw best for the moment. Exulting in his intellectual strength and dexterity, he could, when he pleased, be the greatest sophist that ever contended in the lists of declamation; and from a spirit of contradiction, and a delight in shewing his powers, he would often maintain the wrong side with equal warmth and ingenuity; so that when there was an audience, his real opinions could seldom be gathered from his talk; though when he was in company with a

single friend, he would discuss a subject with genuine fairness. But he was too conscientious to make error permanent and pernicious, by deliberately writing it; and in all his numerous works, he earnestly inculcated what appeared to him to be the truth; his piety being constant, and the ruling principle of all his conduct *."

Mrs Piozzi drew the strong lineaments of his character from the life, at longer and more frequent sittings than Mr Boswell, with a masterly, though a less favourable, flattering pencil, Her admiration of the features and traits of his mind was, perhaps, at last fatigued, and she bebecame less partial to the subject than at her first sittings. The great outline of her picture is sufficiently accurate, and finely drawn, though the colouring may, perhaps, be less warm and brilliant than it would have been at an earlier stage of their acquaintance.

"His stature was remarkably high, and his limbs exceedingly large: his strength was

* Boswell's Life, &c. vol. iv. p. 454.

more than common, I believe, and his activity had been greater, I have heard, than such a form gave one reason to expect: his features were strongly marked, and his countenance particularly rugged; though the original complexion had certainly been fair, a circumstance somewhat unusual, his sight was near, and otherwise imperfect; yet his eyes, though of a light-grey colour, were so wild, so piercing, and at times so fierce, that fear was, I believe, the first emotion in the hearts of all his beholders. His mind was so comprehensive, that no language but that he used could have expressed its contents; and so ponderous was his language, that sentiments less lofty and less solid than his were, would have been encumbered not adorned by it. He was not intentionally, however, a pompous converser: and though he was accused of using big words, as they are called, it was only when little ones could not express his meaning as clearly, or when, perhaps, the elevation of the thought would have been disgraced by a dress less superb. He used to

say, 'that the size of a man's understanding might always be justly measured by his mirth;' and his own was never contemptible. He would laugh at a stroke of genuine humour, or sudden sally of odd absurdity, as heartily and freely as I ever yet saw any man; and though the jest was often such as few felt besides himself, yet his laugh was irresistible, and was observed immediately to produce that of the company, not merely from the notion that it was proper to laugh when he did, but purely out of want of power to forbear it. He was no enemy to splendour of apparel, or pomp of equipage. 'Life,' he would say, 'is barren enough, surely, with all her trappings; let us therefore be cautious how we strip her.' Of his erudition the world has been the judge; and we who produce each a score of his sayings, as proofs of that wit which in him was inexhaustible, resemble travellers, who, having visited Delhi or Golconda, bring home each a handful of oriental pearl, to evince the riches of the Great Mogul. As his purse was ever open to alms-giving, so was his heart tender to

those who wanted relief, and his soul susceptible of gratitude, and of every kind impression; yet, though he had refined his sensibility, he had not endangered his quiet, by encouraging in himself a solicitude about trifles, which he treated with the contempt they deserve. He had a roughness in his manner, which subdued the saucy, and terrified the meek. This was, when I knew him, the prominent part of a character which few durst venture to approach so nearly, and which was, for that reason, in many respects grossly and frequently mistaken; and it was, perhaps, peculiar to him, that the lofty consciousness of his own superiority, which animated his looks, and raised his voice in conversation, cast likewise an impenetrable veil over him when he said nothing. His talk, therefore, had commonly the complexion of arrogance, his silence of superciliousness. He was, however, seldom inclined to be silent when any moral or literary question was started; and it was on such occasions that, like the sage in *Rasselas*, he spoke, and attention watched

his lips; he reasoned, and conviction closed his periods. If poetry was talked of, his quotations were the readiest; and had he not been eminent for more solid and brilliant qualities, mankind would have united to extol his extraordinary memory. His manner of repeating deserves to be described, though, at the same time, it defeats all power of description; but whoever once heard him repeat an ode of Horace, would be long before they could endure to hear it repeated by another. His equity in giving the character of living acquaintance, ought not, undoubtedly, to be omitted in his own, whence partiality and prejudice were totally excluded, and truth alone presided in his tongue; a steadiness of conduct the more to be commended, as no man had stronger likings or aversions. His veracity was, indeed, from the most trivial to the most solemn occasions, strict, even to severity; he scorned to embellish a story with fictitious circumstances, which (he used to say) took off from its real value. For the rest—That beneficence which, during his life,

increased the comforts of so many, may, after his death, be, perhaps, ungratefully forgotten; but that piety which dictated the serious papers in the *Rambler*, will be for ever remembered, for ever, I think, revered. That ample repository of religious truth, moral wisdom, and accurate criticism, breathes, indeed, the genuine emanations of its great author's mind. Though at an immeasureable distance from content, in the contemplation of his own uncouth form and figure, he did not like another man much the less for being a coxcomb. Though a man of obscure birth himself, his partiality to people of family was visible on every occasion; his zeal for subordination warm even to bigotry; his hatred to innovation, and reverence for the old feudal times, apparent, whenever any possible manner of showing them occurred. I have spoken of his piety, his charity, and his truth, the enlargement of his heart, and the delicacy of his sentiments; and when I search for shadow to my portrait, none can I find but what was formed by pride, differently modi-

fied as different occasions shewed it; yet never was pride so purified as Johnson's, at once from meanness and from vanity. The mind of this man was, indeed, expanded beyond the common limits of human nature, and stored with such variety of knowledge, that I used to think it resembled a royal pleasure-ground, where every plant, of every name and nation, flourished in the full perfection of their powers; and where, though lofty and falling cataracts first caught the eye, and fixed the earliest attention of beholders, yet neither the trim parterre, nor the pleasing shrubbery, nor even the antiquated evergreens, were denied a place in some fit corner of the happy valley*."

His moral and intellectual excellencies are estimated by Bishop Horne, with candour, truth, and eloquence; and a fair and impressive apology is made for his failings and his weaknesses. The defence of his *Meditations*, which have been often treated with ridicule,

* Anecdotes, &c. p. 297.

will be particularly acceptable to the friends of true piety.

"Johnson, it is said, was superstitious; but who shall exactly ascertain to us what superstition is? With some it is superstition to pray; with others, to receive the sacrament; with others, to believe in God. In some minds it springs from the most amiable disposition in the world, 'a pious awe and fear to have offended," a wish rather to do too much than too little. Such a disposition one loves, and wishes always to find in a friend; and it cannot be disagreeable in the sight of him who made us. It argues a sensibility of heart, a tenderness of conscience, and the fear of God. Let him who finds it not in himself beware, lest, in flying from superstition, he fall into irreligion and profaneness. That persons of eminent talents and attainments in literature, have been often complained of as dogmatical, boisterous, and inattentive to the rules of good breeding, is well known. But let us not expect every thing from every man. There was no occasion that Johnson should

teach us how to dance, to make bows, or turn compliments. He could teach us better things. To reject wisdom because the person of him who communicates it is uncouth, and his manners are inelegant; what is it, but to throw away a pine apple, and assign for a reason the roughness of the coat? That Johnson was generous and charitable none can deny; but he was not always judicious in the selection of his objects: distress was a sufficient recommendation; and he did not scrutinize into the failings of the distressed. Some are so nice in a scrutiny of this kind, that they can never find any proper objects of their benevolence, and are necessitated to save their money. It should, doubtless, be distributed in the best mannner we are able to distribute it; but what would become of us all, if he, on whose bounty we all depend, should be extreme to mark that which is done amiss? It is hard to judge any man, without a due consideration of all circumstances. Here were stupendous abilities, and suitable attainments; but then here were hereditary disorders of

body and mind, reciprocally aggravating each other, a scrophulous frame, and a melancholy temper; here was a life, the greater part of which passed in making provision for the day, under the pressure of poverty and sickness, sorrow and anguish. So far to gain the ascendant over these as to do what Johnson did, required very great strength of mind. Who can say that, in a like situation, he should long have possessed, or been able to exert it? From the mixture of power and weakness in the composition of this wonderful man, the scholar should learn humility. It was designed to check that pride which great parts and great learning are apt to produce in their possessor. In him it had the desired effect. For though consciousness of superiority might sometimes induce him to carry it high with man, (and even that was much abated in the latter part of his life), his devotions have shewn to the whole world how humbly he walked, at all times, with his God. His example may likewise encourage those of timid and gloomy dispositions not to despond,

when they reflect that the vigour of such an intellect could not preserve its possessor from the depredations of melancholy. They will cease to be surprised and alarmed at the degree of their own sufferings; they will resolve to bear, with patience and resignation, the malady to which they find a Johnson subject as well as themselves; and if they want words, by which to ask relief from him who can alone give it, the God of mercy, and the Father of all comfort, language affords no finer than those in which the prayers of Johnson are conceived, Child of sorrow, who ever thou art, use them; and be thankful that the man existed by whose means thou hast them to use. His eminence and his fame must of course have excited envy and malice; but let envy and malice look at his infirmities and his charities, and they will melt into pity and love. That he should not be conscious of the abilities with which Providence had blessed him, was impossible. He felt his own powers; he felt what he was capable of having performed; and he saw how

little, comparatively speaking, he had performed. Hence his apprehensions in the near prospect of the account to be made, viewed through the medium of constitutional and morbid melancholy, which often excluded from his sight the bright beams of the divine mercy. The indolent man, who is without such apprehensions, has never yet considered the subject as he ought. For one person who fears death too much, there are a thousand who do not fear it enough, nor have thought in earnest about it. Let us only put in practice the duty of self-examination; let us enquire into the success we have experienced in our war against the passions, or even against the undue indulgence of the common appetites, eating, drinking, and sleeping; we shall soon perceive how much more easy it is to form resolutions than to execute them, and shall no longer find occasion, perhaps, to wonder at the weakness of Johnson *."

* Olla Podrida, No. 13.

The comparative excellencies of the style and manner of Johnson and Addison, are estimated by Mr Murphy with a just proportion of classical taste and critical discernment.

"Of Addison, Johnson used to say, *He is the Raphael of Essay writers.* How he differed so widely from such elegant models, is a problem not to be solved, unless it be true, that he took an early tincture from the writers of the last century. Hence the peculiarities of his style, new combinations, sentences of an unusual structure, and words derived from the learned languages." His own account of the matter is, "When common words were less pleasing to the ear, or less distinct in their signification, I familiarized the terms of philosophy, by applying them to popular ideas." But he forgot the observation of Dryden: *If too many foreign words are poured in upon us, it looks as if they were designed, not to assist the natives, but to conquer them.* There is, it must be admitted, a swell of language, often out of all proportion to the sentiment; but there is, in general, a fulness of mind, and

the thought seems to expand with the sound of the words. Determined to discard colloquial barbarisms and licentious idioms, he forgot the elegant simplicity that distinguishes the writings of Addison. He had what Locke calls a round-about view of his subject; and though he was never tainted like many modern wits, with the ambition of shining in paradox, he may be fairly called an ORIGINAL THINKER. His reading was extensive. He treasured in his mind whatever was worthy of notice; but he added to it from his own meditation. He collected, *quæ reconderet, auctaque promeret.* Addison was not so profound a thinker. He depended more upon a fine taste than the vigour of his mind. His Latin poetry shows, that he relished, with a just selection, all the refined and delicate beauties of the Roman classics; and when he cultivated his native language, no wonder that he formed that graceful style which has been so justly admired; simple, yet elegant; adorned, yet never over-wrought; rich in allusion, yet pure and perspicuous; correct, without

labour; and, though sometimes deficient in strength, yet always musical. His essays, in general, are on the surface of life; if ever original, it was in pieces of humour. Johnson had a fund of humour, but he did not know it; nor was he willing to descend to the familiar idiom, and the variety of diction, which that mode of composition required. Addison possessed an unclouded imagination, alive to the first objects of nature and of art. He reaches the sublime without any apparent effort. Johnson is always lofty; he seems, to use Dryden's phrase, "to be o'er-informed with meaning," and his words do not appear to himself adequate to his conception. He moves in state, and his pe-periods are always harmonious. His Oriental Tales are in the true style of eastern magnificence, and yet none of them are so much admired as the Visions of Mirza. In matters of criticism, Johnson is never the echo of preceding writers. He thinks and decides for himself. If we except the Essays on the Pleasures of Imagination, Addison cannot be call-

ed a philosophical critic. His Moral Essays are beautiful; but in that province nothing can exceed the *Rambler;* though Johnson used to say, that the essay on *The burthens of mankind,* (in the Spectator, No. 558.) was the most exquisite he had ever read. Addison lends grace and ornament to truth; Johnson gives it force and energy. Addison makes virtue amiable; Johnson represents it as an awful duty. Addison insinuates himself with an air of modesty; Johnson commands like a dictator; but a dictator in his splendid robes, not labouring at the plough. Addison is the Jupiter of Virgil, with placid serenity talking to Venus:

"Vultu, quo cœlum tempestatesque serenat."

Johnson is JUPITER TONANS: he darts his lightning, and rolls his thunder, in the cause of virtue and piety. The language seems to fall short of his ideas; he pours along, familiarising the terms of philosophy with bold inversions and sonorous periods*."

* Essay, &c. p. 160.

Dr Parr, a disciple of the Johnsonian school, learned, eloquent, fervid, and sagacious, embalmed the remains of his great master in an epitaph, upon his monument, composed with discrimination and elegance; and pronounced an eulogy on the departed moralist, with the affection and reverence due to supereminent abilities and virtues.

"Of literary merit, Johnson, as we all know, was a sagacious, but a most severe judge. Such was his discernment, that he pierced into the most secret springs of human actions; and such was his integrity, that he always weighed the moral character of his fellow-creatures in "the balance of the sanctuary *."

To accumulate yet more testimonies concerning the character and writings of this excellent and extraordinary man, would be neither difficult nor unpleasing. The subject is by no means exhausted; for no man, in modern times, has been the object of so much literary notice, and from persons of acknowledged abilities and literary eminence. But

* Tracts by Warburton and a Warburtonian, 8vo, 1788.

to expatiate farther upon it would extend this customary appendage of contemporary testimonies to an undue length.

The sentence passed by Mr Courtenay, conscientiously, on summing up the evidence of his excellencies and defects, in a juridical capacity, places him, where he ought to be, notwithstanding his foibles and infirmities, high in the temple of Fame, without one dissentient voice. The construction of the stupendous fabric, "that bids our language live *," and the salutary operation of his moral writings, his biography, his manly vigour of thought, his piety, and his charity, preclude the possibility of degradation, and ensure the gratitude, admiration, and reverence of succeeding generations, as they rise, to the latest time.

"Thus sings the Muse, to JOHNSON's mem'ry just,
And scatters praise and censure o'er his dust;
For through each chequer'd scene a contrast ran,
Too sad a proof, how great, how weak is man!

* Sheridan's Prologue to the tragedy of "Sir Thomas Overbury." 1777.

Though o'er his passions conscience held the rein,
He shook at dismal phantoms of the brain:
A boundless faith that noble mind debas'd,
By piercing wit, energic reason grac'd;
Ev'n shades like these, to brilliancy allied,
May comfort fools, and curb the sage's pride;
Yet Learning's sons, who o'er his foibles mourn,
To latest time shall fondly view his urn,
And wond'ring, praise, to human frailties blind,
Talents and virtues of the brightest kind.
The sculptur'd trophy and imperial bust,
That proudly rise around his hallow'd dust,
Shall mould'ring fall, by Time's slow hand decay'd,
But the bright meed of Virtue ne'er shall fade;
Exulting Genius stamps his sacred name,
Enroll'd for ever in the dome of Fame *."

* Poetical Review, &c.

THE END.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

COPY OF Dr JOHNSON's WILL AND CODICIL.

"In the name of God. Amen. I Samuel Johnson, being in full possession of my faculties, but fearing this night may put an end to my life, do ordain this my last Will and Testament. I bequeath to God a soul polluted by many sins, but I hope purified by Christ. I have L.750 in the hands of Bennet Langton, Esq.; L.300 in the hands of Mr Barclay and Mr Perkins, brewers; L.150 in the hands of Dr Percy, bishop of Dromore; L.1000 three *per cent.* annuities in the public funds; and L.100 now lying by me in ready money: all these before-mentioned sums and property I leave, I say, to Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir John Hawkins, and Dr William Scott

of Doctors Commons, in trust, for the following uses: That is to say, to pay to the representatives of the late William Innys, bookseller in St Paul's Churchyard, the sum of L.200 *; to Mrs White, my female servant, L.100 stock in the three *per cent.* annuities aforesaid; the rest of the aforesaid sums of money and property, together with my books, plate, and household furniture, I leave to the before-mentioned Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir John Hawkins, Dr William Scott, also in trust, to be applied, after paying my debts, to the use of Francis Barber, my man-servant, a negro, in such a manner as they shall judge most fit and available to his benefit. And I appoint the aforesaid Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir John Hawkins, and Dr William Scott, sole executors of this my last Will and Testament, hereby revoking all former Wills and Testaments whatever. In witness whereof I hereunto subscribe my name, and affix my seal, this 8th day of December 1784.

"SAMUEL JOHNSON, (L. S.)

"Signed, sealed, published, declared, and delivered, by the said testator, as his last Will and Testament, in the presence of us; the word *two* being first inserted in the opposite page.

"GEORGE STRAHAN.
JOHN DESMOULINS."

* He told Sir John Hawkins, that, his father having become a bankrupt, Mr Innys had assisted him with money or credit to continue his business. "This (said he) I consider an obligation on me to be grateful to his descendants."

"By way of Codicil to my last Will and Testament, I SAMUEL JOHNSON, give, devise, and bequeath, my messuage or tenement, situate at Lichfield*, in the county of Stafford, with the appurtenances, in the tenure or occupation of Mrs Bond of Lichfield aforesaid, or of Mr Hinchman, her under tenant, to my executors, to sell and dispose of the same; and the money arising from such sale I give and bequeath as follows, viz. to Thomas and Benjamin, the sons of Fisher Johnson, late of Leicester, and ——— Whiting, daughter of Thomas Johnson, late of Coventry, and the grand-daughter of the said Thomas Johnson, one full and equal part each; but in case there shall be more grand-daughters than one of the said Thomas Johnson living at the time of my decease, I give and bequeath the part or share of that one to and equally between such grand-daughters †. I give and bequeath to the Rev. Mr Rogers of Berkley, near Froome, in the county of Somerset, the sum of L.100, requesting him to apply the same towards the maintenance of Elizabeth

* The corner-house in the Market-place, built by his father, the two fronts of which, towards the Market and Broad-street, stood upon waste land of the Corporation, under a forty years lease. On the expiration of the term, in 1767, the Corporation shewed their respect and veneration for the merits and learning of their fellow-citizen, by renewing the lease, without any solicitation, for the term of ninety-nine years, at the old rent, which was five shillings, without requiring any fine; and he died possessed of this property.

† Sir John Hawkins estimates the amount of the bequest to his relations, five in number, at L.235, the sum which the house at Lichfield produced at a sale by auction.

Herne, a lunatic *. I also give and bequeath to my god-children, the son and daughter of Mauritius Lowe, painter, each of them, L.100 of my stock in the three *per cent.* consolidated annuities, to be applied and disposed of by and at the discretion of my executors, in the education or settlement in the world of them my said legatees. Also, I give and bequeath to Sir John Hawkins, one of my executors, the Annales Ecclesiastici of Baronius and Holinshed's and Stowe's Chronicles, and also an octavo Common Prayer-Book. To Bennet Langton, Esq. I give and bequeath my Polyglot Bible. To Sir Joshua Reynolds, my great French Dictionary, by Martiniere, and my own copy of my folio English Dictionary, of the last revision. To Dr William Scott, one of my executors, the Dictionnaire de Commerce, and Lectius's edition of the Greek Poets. To Mr Windham, Poetæ Græci Heroici per Henricum Stephanum. To the Rev. Mr Strahan, vicar of Islington, in Middlesex, Mill's Greek Testament, Beza's Greek Testament by Stephens, all my Latin Bibles, and my Greek Bible by Wechelius. To Dr Heberden, Dr Brocklesby, Dr Butter, and Mr

* He had placed Mrs Herne, his first cousin, upon her discharge from Bethlehem Hospital as incurable, in a private mad-house, and constantly paid the bills for her keeping, amounting to L.25 a-year, including an annuity of L.10, bequeathed to her by a lady of the name of Prowse. Mr Rogers, who had married the daughter of Mrs Prowse, probably considering that the interest of L.100 would fall short of Johnson's contribution towards her maintenance, and that the burthen of supporting her would lie on himself, renounced the legacy. The executors applied the L.100 towards her maintenance.

Cruikshank, the surgeon who attended me, Mr Holder, my apothecary, Gerard Hamilton, Esq. Mrs Gardiner of Snow-hill, Mrs Frances Reynolds, Mr Hoole, and the Rev. Mr Hoole, his son, each a book at their election, to keep as a token of remembrance *. I also give and bequeath to Mr John Desmoulins, L.200 consolidated three *per cent.* annuities; and to Mr Sastres, the Italian master, the sum of L.5, to be laid out in books of piety for his own use. And whereas the said Bennet Langton hath agreed, in consideration of the sum of L 750, mentioned in my will to be in his hands, to grant and secure an annuity of L.70, payable during the life of me and my servant, Francis Barber, and the life of the survivor of us, to Mr George Stubbs, in trust for us; my mind and will is, that in case of my decease before the said agreement shall be perfected, the said sum of L.750, and the bond for securing the said sum, shall go to the said Francis Barber; and I hereby give and bequeath to him the same, in lieu of the bequest in his favour, contained in my said Will, or of this Codicil thereto, out of such effects as I shall die possessed of. All the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate and effects, I give and bequeath to my said executors in trust for

* Among the friends to whom he leaves books as tokens of his last remembrance, the omission of the names of Dr Adams, Dr Taylor, Dr Burney, Mr Hector, Mr Murphy, and Mr Boswell, is remarkable. His library, though by no means handsome in its appearance, was sold by Mr Christie for L.247, 9s.; many persons being desirous to have a book which had belonged to him. In many of the books he had written little notes.

the said Francis Barber, his executors and administrators *. Witness my hand and seal, this 9th day of December 1784. " SAMUEL JOHNSON, (L. S.)

" Signed, sealed, published, declared, and delivered by the said Samuel Johnson, as, and for a Codicil to his last Will and Testament, in the presence of us, who, in his presence, and at his request, and also in the presence of each other, have hereto subscribed our names as witnesses.

" JOHN COPLEY.
WILLIAM GIBSON.
HENRY COLE."

† Sir John Hawkins estimates the amount of the bequest to Francis Barber at a sum little short of L.1500, including the annuity of L.70 to be paid to him by Mr Langton. The sum of L.26 obtained by the sale of his *Latin Poems*, and the remission of a debt of L.30 due by him to Mr Beauclerk, by his relict, Lady Diana Beauclerk, afforded the means of benefiting Humphry Heely, an old man and lame, whose first wife was a Ford, the daughter of his mother's brother; and his son, an idiot; and some other poor relations, whose distresses had escaped his recollection in making his testamentary dispositions in the last hours of life.

No. II.

CATALOGUE OF WORKS PROPOSED TO BE EXECUTED BY DR JOHNSON *.

DIVINITY.

"A SMALL book of precepts and directions for piety; the hint taken from the directions in the [Countess of] Morton's [daily] exercise.

PHILOSOPHY, HISTORY, AND LITERATURE IN GENERAL.

"History of Criticism, as it relates to the judging of authors, from Aristotle to the present age. An account of the rise and improvements of that art; of the different opinions of authors, ancient and modern †.

* Given by him to Mr Langton, and by that gentleman presented to his Majesty, (p. 105.) It is appended to this narrative, as it affords a curious and interesting proof of his intimacy with books and general literature, and as it it includes many noble and useful designs, which must still be considered as *desiderata* in English literature.

† The completion of this comprehensive outline, executed with competent erudition and acumen, would be a valuable accession to English literature. Nothing of the kind has been attempted in this country.

"Translation of the History of Herodian.

"New edition of Fairfax's translation of Tasso *, with notes, glossary, &c.

"Chaucer, a new edition of him, from manuscripts and old editions, with various readings, conjectures, remarks on his language, and the changes it had undergone from the earliest times to his age, and from his age to the present; with notes explanatory of customs, &c. and references to Boccace and other authors from whom he has borrowed, with an account of the liberties he has taken in telling the stories; his life, and an exact etymological glossary †.

"Aristotle's Rhetoric, a translation of it into English.

"A Collection of Letters, translated from the modern writers, with some account of the several authors.

"Oldham's Poems, with notes, historical and critical ‡.

* First printed in 1600, and dedicated to Q. Elizabeth. The 4th edition, modernized, with a glossary, &c. was printed in 8vo, 1749. A republication of the original edition, with suitable appendages, may be expected from the present age, so laudably attentive to old English literature.

† An incomparable edition of the "Canterbury Tales," upon this plan, has been executed by Mr Tyrwhitt, in 5 vol. 8vo, 1775—78, and a copious life of the poet by Mr Godwin, in 2 vol. 4to. 1803.

‡ An edition of Oldham, upon this plan, but by no means to the full extent, was executed by Capt. E. Thompson, in 3 vol. 12mo, 1770.

"Roscommon's Poems, with notes.

"Lives of the Philosophers, written with a polite air, in such a manner as may divert as well as instruct.

"History of the Heathen Mythology, with an explication of the fables, both allegorical and historical; with references to the poets.

"History of the state of Venice, in a compendious manner.

"Aristotle's Ethics, an English translation of them, with notes.

"Geographical Dictionary, from the French.

"Hierocles upon Pythagoras, translated into English, perhaps with notes.

"A Book of Letters upon all kinds of subjects.

"Claudian, a new edition of his works, cum nòtis variorum, in the manner of Burman.

"Tully's Tusculan Questions, a translation of them.

"Tully's de Natura Deorum, a translation of those books.

"Benzo's New History of the New World, to be translated.

"Machiavel's History of Florence, to be translated.

"History of the Revival of Learning in Europe; containing an account of whatever contributed to the restoration of literature; such as controversies, printing, the destruction of the Greek empire, the encouragement of great men, with the lives of the most

eminent patrons, and most eminent early professors of all kinds of learning in different countries *.

" A Body of Chronology, in verse, with historical notes †.

" A Table of the Spectators, Tatlers, and Guardians, distinguished by figures into six degrees of value, with notes, giving the reasons of preference or degradation.

" A Collection of Letters from English authors, with a preface giving some account of the writers, with reasons for selection, and criticism upon styles; remarks on each letter, if needful.

" A Collection of Proverbs from various languages, Jan. 6. —53.

" A Dictionary to the Common Prayer, in imitation of Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible, March —52.

" A Collection of Stories and examples like those of Valerius Maximus, Jan. 18. —53.

" From Ælian, a volume of select stories, perhaps from others, Jan. 28. —53.

" Collections of Travels, Voyages, Adventures, and Descriptions of Countries.

" Dictioinary of Ancient History and Mythology.

" Treatise on the Study of Polite Literature,

* This splendid and comprehensive plan, which had been contemplated by Bacon, Collins, Warton, and Gibbon, and corresponded, in some degree, with the powers of Johnson, has been partially executed, with respect to Italian literature, by the compositions of Tiraboschi, Roscoe, and Walker.

† He commenced a body of *geography*, in verse, entitled *Geographia Metrica*, which closes the *Poemata* in Murphy's edition.

containing the history of learning, directions for editions, commentaries, &c.

" Maxims, Characters, and Sentiments, after the manner of Bruyere, collected out of ancient authors, particularly the Greek, with Apophthegms.

" Classical Miscellanies, Select Translations from ancient Greek and Latin authors.

" Lives of illustrious persons, as well of the active as the learned, in imitation of Plutarch.

" Judgment of the learned upon English authors.

" Poetical Dictionary of the English tongue.

" Considerations upon the present state of London.

" Collection of Epigrams, with notes and observations.

" Observations on the English language, relating to words, phrases, and modes of speech.

" Minutiæ Literariæ, Miscellaneous reflections, criticisms, emendations, notes.

" History of the Constitution.

" Comparison of Philosophical and Christian Morality, by sentences collected from the moralists and fathers.

" Plutarch's Lives in English, with notes.

POETRY AND WORKS OF IMAGINATION.

" Hymn to Ignorance.

" The Palace of Sloth—a vision.

" Coluthus, to be translated *.

* There is an old translation of the " Rape of Helen," by Sir Edward Sherburne, and a new version by the Rev. Mr Meen, the editor of Fawkes's " Apollonius Rhodius."

"Prejudice—a poetical Essay.

"The Palace of Nonsense—a vision †.

† Besides the works which this catalogue includes, he meditated, in 1746, a *Life of Alfred*, a favourite scheme, which he long wished to execute; and, in 1752, a new translation of *the Lusiad*, an undertaking destined, at the distance of twenty years, to exercise the powers of Mickle. In the "Introduction" to the English "Lusiad," a tribute of gratitude is paid for his "kindness for the man, and good wishes for the translator," in terms dictated by himself. At a subsequent period, he conceived the design of writing the *Life of Oliver Cromwell;* and, near the close of his life, seriously entertained the thought of translating *Thuanus*. "I should have no trouble (he said) but that of dictation, which could be performed as speedily as an amanuensis could write." A *Life of Spenser* was suggested to him, which he declined for want of new materials; and he rejected an earnest invitation to publish a volume of *Devotional Exercises*, (though a large sum of money was offered for it), from motives of the sincerest modesty. A translation of Sallust, *De Bello Catalinario*, was found among his papers, executed with sufficient fidelity, but marked with no peculiar character of his style.

Of the the numerous projects sketched out in this catalogue, it is to be regretted, that not even a single article, of the smallest extent, was ever executed by him. No blame, however, is justly ascribable to one of the most extensive and voluminous writers we ever had, because he was not always composing or editing works of literature. Had health and unembarrassed leisure been allowed him, he might probably have done more; but several of his plans were of immense extent, which no individual, however vast his powers and comprehensive his attainments might be, could hope to execute.

END OF THE APPENDIX.

CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS.

P. 46. l. 11. for *Brerewood* read *Brewood*; p. 77. note, for *Horn* read *Henn*; p. 102. l. 8. for *knew* read *know*; p. 112. l. 1. put inverted commas before *with*; p. 135. note, for *Kirkaldy* read *Pittenweem*; p. 190. l. 6. delete inverted commas; p 205. l. 2. for *Mrs* read *Mr*; p. 237. l. 3. after *well* add *as*; p. 253. note, for *Ambrose* read *Samuel*; p. 261. l. 1. after *title* add *of*; p. 270. note, for *Burryau* read *Bourryau*; p. 275. l. 7. for *the* read *his*; p. 337. l. 4. after *was* add *as*, l. 5. after *be* add *as*; p. 361. l. 14. put inverted commas after *before*; p. 436. l. 7. for *penetential* read *penitential*; p. 514. l. 1. put a period after *virtue*; p. 529. note, for *Spenser* read *Spencer*.

Besides the dedications to Johnson, mentioned according to their dates, there was one by a lady, of "Anningait and Ajut, a Greenland tale, versified," 4to, 1761; and one by Mr Walker, of his "Rhetorical Grammar," &c. 8vo, 1781. Mr Davies also inscribed to him the "Life of Massinger," prefixed to a new edition of his Works, in 4 vol. 8vo,

1779, "as a small but sincere tribute to his liberal and extensive learning, his great and uncommon genius, and his universal and active benevolence."

The homage paid to him, incidentally, in the writings of his contemporaries, must be reckoned as no inconsiderable circumstance of his fame. The compliments, both in prose and verse, are so numerous, that they amount almost to a general tribute to his literary supremacy. The homage of Dr Grainger, the mutual friend of Johnson and Bishop Percy, expressed in his West-India georgic, "the Sugar Cane," is memorable, as a tribute of revered friendship and indelible affection, endeared by the remoteness of his residence in the island of St Christopher.

——— 'Some tears drop from mine eyes
For friends I left in Albion's distant isle—
For Johnson, Percy——O were ye here!
How would your converse charm the lonely hour!
Your converse, where mild wisdom tempers mirth,
And charity, the petulance of wit:
How would your converse polish my rude lays,
With what now noble images adorn!
Then should I scarce regret the banks of Thames,
All as we sat beneath that sand-box shade;
Whence the delighted eye expatiates wide
O'er the fair landscape, where, in loveliest forms,
Green Cultivation hath arrayed the land." *

The selection of the most condensed and brilliant sentences from his Essays, entitled, "The Beauties of Johnson," published by Kearsley, in 2 vol. 8vo,

* Book iii. v. 507.

1781, with his approbation, was followed by a selection of his sayings, apophthegms, &c. from the series of his conversations, entitled, "Johnson's Table-Talk," 8vo, 1795, compiled by Mr Jones, after the example of a similar publication under the name of the learned Selden. His "Lives of the English Poets" were "abridged for the improvement of youth," 8vo, 1797, by the same judicious compiler.

As a tribute to his reputation, must be reckoned the collection which is preparing by Lady Bishop, of a series of portraits and engravings, to illustrate his biography. Among the Lichfieldians are the interesting portraits of Gilbert Walmsley, Molly Aston, Tetty, Lucy Porter, &c. A drawing has been made for this collection from a picture of Miss Boothby, at Ashbourne-Hall, painted according to her directions in the following verses.

Tuesday morning, between 3 & 4 o'clock,
Jan. 25. 1751, 2.

"If the ladies insist on having my picture, I beg them to give these directions to the painter:

"In easy folds of drapery arrayed,
Clothe me in snowy white, a vestal maid;
Place by my side, undeck'd by flowery art,
A little altar, and a flaming heart;
Emblem of Friendship's warmth, serenely bright,
The fairest ray of Virtue's silver light.
Study each attitude, with ease conserve
What best may shew and Friendship's flame preserve,
And speak the fame to which my vows aspire,
A Vestal, sacred to pure Friendship's fire."

Colonel Myddleton of Gwaynynog, near Denbigh, repaid the honour of his acquaintance, during his sojourn in the principality, by erecting an urn on the banks of a rivulet in the park, where he delighted to stand and recite verses, with the following inscription, which claims a place among the memorials of his fame.

"This spot was often dignified by the presence of
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.
whose moral writings, exactly conformable to the precepts of
Christianity,
gave ardour to Virtue, and confidence to Truth."

Near his bust, erected by his friends, in the cathedral church of Lichfield, (p. 457.) is a similar bust of Garrick, erected by his relict, after a design of the same artists, Wyatt, architect, and Westmacott, sculptor, with the following inscription, combining the *desiderium chari conjugis* with his emphatic eulogy on the dramatic talents of his deceased friend, (p. 386.)

EVA MARIA, relict of DAVID GARRICK, Esq.
caused this monument to be erected to the memory
of her beloved husband;
who died the 20th of January 1779, aged 63 years.
He had not only the amiable qualities of private life,
but such astonishing dramatic talents,
as too well verified the observation of his friend,
"His death eclipsed the gaiety of nations,
and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure."
JOHNSON.

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